

|                                                           |            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>PREFACE</b>                                            | <b>3</b>   |
| <b>INTRODUCTION</b>                                       | <b>4</b>   |
| <b>PART I: AWARENESS. <i>NOW WHAT?</i></b>                | <b>7</b>   |
| 1: The Announcement                                       | 8          |
| 2: White Boxes                                            | 12         |
| 3: Money Matters                                          | 16         |
| 4: The Empty Inbox                                        | 20         |
| 5: The Power of Grieving                                  | 24         |
| 6: Losing Your Anchors                                    | 28         |
| 7: Go With the Flow                                       | 32         |
| <b>PART II: ALIGNMENT. <i>GET TO KNOW YOURSELF</i></b>    | <b>37</b>  |
| 8: Work Smarter, Not Harder                               | 38         |
| 9: Who Are You?                                           | 44         |
| 10: Dreaming Out Loud                                     | 48         |
| 11: Finding Clarity                                       | 52         |
| 12: Setting a Direction                                   | 56         |
| 13: You've Got Benefits                                   | 60         |
| 14: Resume Refresh                                        | 64         |
| <b>PART III: ACTIVATION. <i>MAKE IT HAPPEN!</i></b>       | <b>71</b>  |
| 15: Redrawing Your Map                                    | 72         |
| 16: The Power of Choice                                   | 76         |
| 17: Growing Your Network                                  | 82         |
| 18: Interviewing to Shine                                 | 86         |
| 19: Navigating Stormy Seas                                | 92         |
| 20: Making Lemonade                                       | 96         |
| 21: Life is the Journey                                   | 102        |
| <b>CLOSING</b>                                            | <b>107</b> |
| <b>EXERCISE SUPPLEMENTS</b>                               | <b>109</b> |
| Appendix A: Financial Assessment Checklist                | 111        |
| Appendix B: Personal Priority Grid (PPG)                  | 113        |
| Appendix C: Resume Tip Sheet                              | 115        |
| Appendix D: Networking Tip Sheet                          | 117        |
| Appendix E: Interviewing Tip Sheet                        | 119        |
| Appendix F: Your Mind: Teacher, Creature,<br>or Companion | 123        |

## Preface

---

Here's the deal. This past spring, I had a moment of truth. You know, one of those moments where your entire life comes to a complete stop and you are suddenly staring at yourself in the mirror, asking the question, "Now what?"

After publishing a series of books about finding better balance in life, I was working on a manuscript for my next book. And although writing and speaking are my passions, working a full-time job keeps gas in my tank and food on my table. These are just the realities of life.

Then one morning, without any notice, I was told that my full-time job was over. I couldn't believe it. I loved my job and the people I worked with each day. I wasn't prepared to leave it so suddenly. I never thought this would happen to me.

I decided to use this experience as a learning opportunity. Just as the proverbial phrase suggests, "When life hands you lemons, make lemonade." This book is the lemonade.

I hope that the personal observations, insights, and stories I've used to help me get through this challenging, yet powerful, experience will help you navigate through your career transition. Sometimes the only way to truly learn from something is to fully experience it. This book can help you to embrace the events of your life, ride the waves of change, and come out better for it in the end.

*Life goes on!*

Michael Thomas Sunnarborg  
September 2015

## INTRODUCTION

---

A layoff or career transition is a major life event. It's a big deal for anyone.

Sometimes during major life events, we want to hurry up and get through the discomfort without taking time to respond thoughtfully and deliberately to the situation. A sudden career transition is a good example of this. If we are triggered into fear, our first response might be to frantically rush out and take any job—anything to keep our income flowing and our lifestyle uninterrupted. Or, we can choose a different response.

This book is about walking down that different path.

In the following pages we will be discussing how to respond to sudden career transitions in gentle, self-aware, and thoughtful ways so that the next step on your career path is a positive one. Doesn't that feel like a more mature and mindful approach?

You have the potential to experience a healthy career transition no matter where you are on your journey, but in order to move through something, you first need to accept it. Sometimes acceptance doesn't come easily—it takes courage, dedication, and commitment. Integration comes in small steps. By seeking to understand yourself better, learning to focus your energy, and practicing new healthy habits, you can get through anything, especially something as challenging as a career transition.

There are three parts to this book, each focusing on one of three stages of awareness, alignment, and activation. Each chapter explores an aspect of the career transition process, primarily focused on how to survive and bounce back

after a layoff. Each chapter has been written to gently shift your perspective and provide you with helpful tools and exercises to assist you.

At the end of each chapter are bulleted summary points called a *Reality Check*, along with questions to ponder. You might find it useful to journal about the questions or simply mull them over during your day. They can also serve as a useful meditation focus. Simply bring the questions into your mind during your regular meditation practice and notice the thoughts that float up in response.

I've also added *Inner Affirmations*—positive messages for you to consider as you process the content from each chapter. These messages are coming from my inner voice, or “Wise Will,” and are the guiding thoughts that helped me get through this challenging life event. My hope is that they will help and guide you as well.

A few of the chapters have a Supplemental Exercise located in the back of the book. These exercises include helpful checklists or templates designed to enhance the chapter content.

One final note: The chapters address the process of career transition chronologically and will make the most sense if read in order—at least the first time through. Then after you've completed the book, you can return to any of the chapters or exercises to refresh yourself as needed.

A career transition, like any other major life event, can be a poignant and cathartic experience. It can also be a powerful opportunity to learn more about yourself and the world around you. It all depends on how you see it. Join me on this journey as I introduce some simple tools for career transition.

## CHAPTER 1 — THE ANNOUNCEMENT

---

*Don't be afraid of change, because it is  
leading you to a new beginning.*

— Joyce Meyers

My day started like any other Friday. I got into the office, unpacked my things, and started to prepare for the day. As I checked email, I noticed that an “urgent meeting” had been added on my calendar for 9:00 a.m. that morning. I thought to myself, *this must be about the new product changes. Great!* So at 9:00 a.m., I went to the conference room, took a seat, and waited patiently. At 9:05 a.m., our CEO quickly entered the room and closed the door behind him.

"I've called you together this morning to make an important announcement. We're taking a new direction with the company and all of you in this room are not included. You are being let go immediately. You will be given a severance package including any unused vacation, and HR will be contacting you to follow-up. There are boxes out front for you to take back to your desks, pack up your things, and leave the premises within the hour. We are sorry to do this, but it was a necessary step."

Announcements like this are not uncommon. Not anymore. While in the past our chances of being laid off

from a job may have been rare, the speed of today's business and the exponential acceleration of technology have caused our world to change size and direction more rapidly than ever before. As companies react to these changes, they grow in some areas and shrink in others. And while many companies work hard to keep good talent, the odds are good that at some point, you'll be part of a group that no longer has a place in the business plan.

Midway through the announcement I started to think. *Wait a minute. This can't include me. This is about the other employees. I must have been invited to this meeting to help facilitate the process. Seriously, I just got a raise last month; I'm developing a whole new program for a new product; and I've been told how fantastic my work is, so this is obviously some sort of mistake. Right...?*

No. I was included, along with a room full of others. In less than 60 seconds it was over. We slowly rose from our chairs and left the room. No one spoke a word—there was only awkward silence.

What just happened?

Layoffs have been around since the beginning of employment, but in the rapidly changing landscape of our current business economy, they seem to be more common. Any worker could be laid off: corporate executive, janitor, teacher, or sales clerk. No one is immune to business restructuring.

First reactions to being laid off are usually, "Why me? What did I do wrong?" We may automatically assume we are to blame for this unexpected change when, in reality, the layoff had nothing to do with us, personally. Layoffs are business decisions based on restructuring and realignment for business reasons and generally not based on personal performance. However, just because it is a

business decision doesn't mean it doesn't *feel* personal. We are all human beings with feelings, so how can we *not* take something like this personally?

I was numb. I stopped at the front desk, picked up a white box and carried it to my desk. I looked around my office at everything I'd created over the last two and a half years, and suddenly realized it was no longer mine. Some people came over to hug me. I felt like I was dreaming. The whole situation felt surreal. It took everything in me just to stop, breathe, and start gathering up my things.

I had just become the newest member of ***The White Box Club***.

When we experience an intense moment or receive unexpected news, our tendency is to hold our breath. Holding the breath lets us experience a feeling of being in control—at least for the moment. But we eventually must exhale. Consciously breathing out can create a feeling of release. The act of exhaling allows us to relax and let go. Although breathing consciously is temporary, it can bring a bit of relief. Sometimes, breathing is all we can do.

In the moment of a layoff, it's virtually impossible to think. It's hard to remember that you have become wiser, larger, and more powerful than you were before this job. In the words of a former colleague, "You can lay off an employee, but you can't lay off their experience." Looking back on this in the future will remind you that it was a big event—a life-changing moment—and like all other major life events, **this too shall pass**.

## REALITY CHECK

- If you've been laid off, it's not about you.
- You've done nothing wrong.
- Layoffs are a business decision.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- 1) How can I support myself during this difficult time?
- 2) How can I learn to accept this even though I can't control it?

## INNER AFFIRMATIONS

*"I don't need to figure out what's going to happen next for me right away. In due time I will find new direction, but for now I'm going to take time to step back, process, and reflect. Tomorrow is another day and another opportunity to recreate myself again.*

*In the meantime, I just need to breathe."*