

The Career Coach

Title: **Sometimes You Get a Second Chance** by Elaine Voci, Ph.D.

A former banker becomes a college-town chef. A tenured professor becomes the CEO of a nonprofit. A special events planner becomes a celebrant. Who doesn't fantasize about a second career?

You may have worked in the same profession for years and feel fresh out of new challenges. You might feel that your talents are going to waste, or you may have a long-held dream career that keeps calling you. According to a recent survey, as many as 8 million Americans (aged 45 – 70) have already begun “encore careers” that combine a decent income with work that is personally meaningful and carries a social impact.

If you've lost a job, taken early retirement, or are about to retire, this is your moment. You can reinvent yourself and “rewire” - not retire. And surprise: your new career may last longer than your first one.

Ed and Mary Russell are adult education teachers living in Carmel; Ed holds a doctorate and Mary a master's of education. They share a lifelong passion for adult learners - the kind of students who “want to learn.” They were partially retired when the State of Indiana eliminated the GED program on TV after 25 years, and the program's executive director retired, the couple saw an opportunity to renew the program as a not for profit 501-c -3 charitable organization (<http://www.2ndchanceeducation.org>). They receive no tax dollars and depend on donations from individuals who recognize the “win-win” value of the GED in which both students and society benefit.

Each student receives a workbook and tutoring which costs about \$150 to prepare for the GED test. The earned income of someone with a GED can be about the same as a high school dropout, but the GED opens up new possibilities to attend college or technical school. Two years beyond a GED, studies show that annual income doubles.

By choosing to play new roles in a field they already knew and loved, Ed and Mary were able to apply their combined expertise and passion into a mutual encore career. They derive great satisfaction from helping adult learners complete the missing years of their high school education; as Ed describes it “Our average student is 23-30 years of age and from a lower rung on the socio economic ladder; they often believe they are incapable of learning. When they see that they can study and begin to realize their full potential, it's inspiring for them and for us!” Mary adds, “There's a missionary quality to our work; we know many adult learners who are the first to graduate from high school in their family. Once they achieve a GED, they go on to make something of their lives and contribute to society. It's life changing!”

Three Things to Consider Before Starting an Encore Career

1. Seek the support of your family before you launch. Have a plan and a timetable; blend pragmatism with passion and be honest about your strengths and weaknesses.
2. It's hard to cope with being a beginner again; you have to be someone who is open to change. Going from being a seasoned professional to being a neophyte takes psychological adjustment, inner strength and determination.
3. If you have a fire burning in you to do this new work, you must follow it. You do not serve yourself, or anyone else, if you don't. A good book on making the leap is *Life Makeovers: Take Time for Your Life* by Cheryl Richardson.

Elaine Voci is a published author and a career coach located in Carmel at Elaine Voci Life Skills Coaching, LLC. Read more of Elaine's musings on her blog located at www.elainevoci.com