

ACT 2: MY NEW LIFE

CONTINUED now topping 80. That means more years after the kids are grown or career goals have been met. Williamson likes the way Lidia Bronte, PhD, puts it: "It's as if women have added 15 years to their lives, but in the middle, not the end." That has women asking themselves, *What do I want to do with the rest of my life?*

What spurs a midlife transition? (Notice we're not calling it a crisis: "It's only a crisis if you ignore your feelings and don't go through the process," says Williamson.) For some women it happens when their last child leaves home and they look at their husband and say, *Now what?* For others the death of a parent or friend is a shocking wakeup call to do what's meaningful now. "Sometimes, it's just a feeling that something's not right," says Barbara Moses, PhD, author of *Women Confidential: Midlife Women Explode the Myths of Having It All*. "A woman may find she's losing patience more easily or feels bored." A nagging sense of *Is this all there is?* may bubble to the surface. It's important to note, says Sue Shellenbarger, author of *The Breaking Point: How Female Midlife Crisis Is Transforming Today's Women*, that "no generation of women has juggled more roles: work, family, community, aging parents." The frustration of doing it all for so long can be the spark that ignites a powerful desire to change.

The good news is that this generation of midlife women is in a unique position to make those changes. They have greater earning power and more education than generations past, says Shellenbarger, giving them "the financial muscle to act on their wishes, and the skills to make their dreams come true."

Women are grasping these exciting opportunities with both hands and shedding old attitudes that have limited them in the past. Formerly, women may have been

focused on their bodies aging, slowing down, doing less, notes Williamson. "But today, the spirit is on the incline," she says. Midlife is a wonderfully fulfilling time to explore new avenues, test your limits and go further than ever

before. Ultimately, it's about living life as only you know deep in your heart it is meant to be lived, points out Williamson.

Need a little inspiration? Here are three women who followed their hearts to a midlife redesign.

driven to solo success



Six years ago, after being downsized out of two director of operations jobs that she loved, and unable to find a new position, Adrienne Simpson, a single mom from Atlanta, fell into a depression. "I just shut down," she admits. But she knew she had to pull herself out of it when she noticed her 12-year-old daughter falling with her. On their own for a decade, mother and daughter had always cited "girl power" as their source of strength. "One day she said to me, 'Mom, what about girl power?'" recalls Adrienne, now 53. In that moment, she knew she couldn't let her daughter see her defeated.

"I didn't want to go back to corporate America," says Adrienne. "I wanted to have control over my own destiny. So I began thinking about what kind of business I could start." Meanwhile, Adrienne's mother, who had also been living in Atlanta, decided to move back to Michigan to be near family. As Adrienne began looking for a moving company that specialized in helping seniors relocate, she realized that no such company existed. Bingo! The idea for her business, Smooth Mooove (wemoveseniors.com), was born.

Adrienne spent a lot of time researching her business idea and used personal credit cards to finance the startup. Even *(Please turn to 36)*