

First Thirty Days

BY DANA MOSS PULIS

“You know what’s weird?
Day by day, nothing
seems to change,
but pretty soon. . .
everything’s different.”

—Calvin and Hobbes

How often is it said that the only thing constant in life is change? And yet, when it happens, we act shocked, as if somebody plucked us out of our life and deposited us into someone else’s.

No, this is your life, and yes, it will change—often.

Meet Ariane de Bonvoisin, a New York businesswoman and founder of First 30 Days – a forward-thinking company that offers advice and inspiration for people who find themselves dealing with life changes. Her Web site, her message and her vision are being met with open arms as people embrace a change-leader.

De Bonvoisin recently spoke to Rocky Mountain College’s graduating seniors, coaching the up-and-comers to embrace change. She shared with them nine crucial skills needed to navigate any change. We caught up with de Bonvoisin during her Billings visit and asked her about her background and what drives her interest in helping others. Here’s what she told Magic.

You’ve worked for some big name corporations—what is your background?

I had several corporate jobs that were impressive on the outside. I worked for BMG, Sony Music and Time Warner. I was young, successful and managing a multi-million dollar fund, but it wasn’t the right job for me. It was my identity, but it really was the wrong ladder on the wrong wall, and I was very high up the ladder.

So you left a dream job?

It was affecting my health. I began to listen and realized that I was not allowing life to flow in between the cracks. Life happens outside your comfort zone, not in it, and I was in a comfort zone, even if it wasn’t the right one. I decided I needed to listen. I took my savings and I left. I had no idea what would happen.

And what happened?

I took a year to spend some time in Italy and read 100 books in every café I could find. I climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro, I accompanied a group of students to Antarctica, and I went cage diving with sharks in Africa. I got involved with a nonprofit in Africa where I learned some invaluable lessons about passion.

How did Africa teach you about passion?

I was asked to make calls for this project to some big names and big corporations. So there I was, just me in my little apartment, asking for support on this project. And you know what? People were calling me back. I found that a good idea, passion and reaching out will get anyone to call back. This is not what they taught me at Stanford. It was like, “Wow, I have this new muscle inside me!”



CASEY RIFFE

9 The Nine Principles of Change

Ariane de Bonvoisin, founder and CEO of First 30 Days, introduces nine principles in her book that help a person make it through any change. Here is a summary from her Web site of each principle of change:

- 1. Change Your View of Change:** Beliefs Can Make all the Difference. Your biggest need right now is to develop new beliefs: about yourself, about this change and about life in general. Nothing will have a bigger impact on moving through change.
- 2. The Change Guarantee™:** From This Situation, Something Good Will Come. Every change always has a gift associated with it. While it's natural to find change hard, it's important to remember that there are two sides to every coin and something good will always come. This is, by far, the most important belief to have during the first 30 days of change.
- 3. The Change Muscle™:** You're Stronger than You Think. You are much stronger, much smarter and much more intuitive than you have ever been told. You are more resilient and more powerful. Once you truly know and believe this, you will be able to get through any change, even the hardest one you can imagine, by activating your change muscle.
- 4. Change Demons:** How to Recognize Negative Emotions and Move Past Them. Emotions are like fuel during change. The negative ones can stall us, making change harder, while the positive ones can help us move through a change in a simpler, quicker, more conscious way.
- 5. The Gift of Acceptance:** Resisting Change is Not the Answer. Acceptance is an essential part of change. Without it, we resist the forward momentum of the next thing and remain stuck in what once was. Let go of your idea of how life should be.
- 6. The Things You Can Control:** What You Say, Think and Feel. At your most stuck point, if you can speak different words, think a slightly better thought and get in touch with how you are feeling, you can become unstuck in a matter of minutes.
- 7. Meet your Spiritual Side:** Where Tranquility, Ideas and Wisdom Live. When everything around you is changing, look for the part of yourself that doesn't fear change—the part of you that is always there, 24/7. It knows the way.
- 8. Your Change Support Team:** The People and Things That Can Help. During change, it's natural to believe that we are alone, but whatever the situation, there is always someone or something that can help.
- 9. Get Unstuck:** Actions to Move You Through Any Change. During the first 30 days of any change, it's natural to feel stuck. But now is the time to take action. Actions come in many forms. Some are big and obvious; some are so small you may think they are irrelevant. But any action you take is a choice to move forward.

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Did that new muscle flex into First 30 Days?

It did. I had the idea for First 30 Days when I was working at Time Warner. I noticed when I started there that the first 30 days were tremendously challenging. I had this new job, new responsibilities, I had regrets and I didn't even know if I liked the people I was working with. I thought, "Isn't it interesting that all the stuff comes up in the first 30 days?" I knew I wasn't the only one who felt this way, and I began to develop the idea for this company, but I shelved it. It felt very small to me and never left my inner world. But I couldn't shake it. Eventually I got around people who believed I could do this company. I struggled at first.

You had doubts?

Oh yeah. I had doubts and fears from the first day. I was in a whole new playground and I didn't know if I could play there.

Is change harder today for people?

Definitely. We have a 35-page report com-

ing out where we interviewed 2,000 people across America about change and compared to a similar study done 40 years ago. We identified 550 life changes and measured the top 500 changes. The research revealed that nine out of 10 changes are more stressful than 40 years ago. Change seems to be getting harder.

Explain a bit more about the idea behind First 30 Days.

The idea is that whenever we encounter change in our lives—be it unpredictable or self-propelled—the first few days and weeks are often the hardest, most emotional time. It's when we have the most questions, emotions, doubts and fears, and when decisions need to be made. This is also the time when we are most in need of direction, information and support. I made it my mission to ensure that everyone has a place to go during times of change that can help make it easier. We've never been taught how to change, and we are either good at going with life or good at going against it. People

need to get good at change, and that is what first30days.com is about.

So people can go on first30days.com and get that help during times of change?

They can do that and also can find the inspiration to make a change, the ones they've always dreamed of making. We help them get through a period of change by giving them access to good information and fostering an encouraging community of people going through change so they remember they are not alone. If they want to make a change, we get them off on the right track and help them progress through the first 30 days.

Are you good at change?

I am now. Trying to go with this business of change while I'm going through change means I need to read my own book!

Ariane de Bonvoisin's company, First 30 Days, can be found at www.first30days.com. Her book, "The First 30 Days: Your Guide to Any Life Change," comes out May 2008. **MC**

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