



# The Change Manual:

PART TWO

## New Rules for a Man's Forties

Successfully navigating change is the number one life skill to master. Author **Ariane de Bonvoisin** interviewed hundreds of successful men, from business titans to Nobel Prize winners, for her book, *The First 30 Days* ([first30days.com](http://first30days.com)). She noticed similar patterns, attitudes, and ways of thinking that were common among people who are good at change. Here, seven men explain how de Bonvoisin's change principles have helped them embrace change and transform their lives.

### 1 Maintain Positive Beliefs

"If you're always looking down, all you will ever see is your feet," says psychologist Mario Alonso, PhD. "You need to raise your head and look around. It's more than a platitude: Being in a good mood broadens your attention span and lets you see future opportunities, while being in a bad mood tends to make you focus on the now, according to a recent study in the *Journal of Consumer Research* and a wealth of research by Martin E. P. Seligman, PhD, a professor of psychology at the University of Pennsylvania, who has demonstrated how positive thinking boosts productivity. But an element of self-awareness is critical: You have to be realistic. To thrive in tough times, you have to figure out your strengths. I often do assessments with my clients, but you can also do your own self-audit. I do one myself every year. Ask yourself, *What were my greatest accomplishments in the past year, five years, and 10 years? What do I consistently do well? What kinds of work activities give me energy rather than drain it? What kinds of projects use my complete skill set? Am I an ideas person? A self-starter? Team oriented? A conflict resolver?* By focusing on your strengths, you're positioning yourself for success."

Mario Alonso, PhD, is a therapist, an executive coach, and the author of *Family Business Survival*.

### 2 Test Yourself Periodically

"President Bill Clinton once described me as a man of 'uncommon common sense,'" says James Lee Witt, director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency from 1993 to 2001. "The term refers to a skill set that is helpful when dealing with periods of change. Uncommon common sense is a bone-deep faith in your ability to cope in a bad situation, faith that you can decide what to do, figure out how to do it, pick up the pieces of your life, and go on. It's frightening the first time you have to tap into that faith, but the more you're tested, the more you can rely on your experience. I've witnessed this in thousands of people when dealing with various traumatic experiences and in my own life in organizing disaster recovery efforts against seemingly insurmountable odds. Whatever it is inside us that instills, facilitates, and conveys such confidence, the truth about it is this: It grows, like bark on a tree, with every trial you face."

James Lee Witt is the author of *Stronger in the Broken Places* and CEO of James Lee Witt Associates.

### 3 Identify and Neutralize the Anxiety of Change

"Automatic negative thoughts are the main drivers of anxiety and depression," says Daniel Amen, MD, a specialist in brain imaging. "The latest science shows that they actually increase the production of stress hormones, which can kill brain cells. But you can learn how to identify these thoughts and neutralize them by writing down negative thoughts when they come up and then asking yourself these



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P. K. Shah, MD, 69, is the director of cardiology at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, in Los Angeles.

"I did the things you're supposed to do when you turn 40: I got a prostate exam and a lipid profile. My cholesterol was on the high side, so I stopped eating red meat, fried foods, and dairy products and started following a heart-healthy diet. For breakfast every day I have whole-grain cereal with a handful of almonds and walnuts, nonfat milk, and a spoonful of cinnamon. For lunch and dinner, I alternate between grilled skinless chicken and grilled fish, and accompany both with a variety of vegetables, beans, and lentils. I also eat a variety of fruits, especially berries, throughout the day. Eating this way has brought my cholesterol level down to normal."

four questions about each one: *Is it true? Can I absolutely know it's true? How does it make me feel? Who would I be without this thought?* I've used this therapy to help thousands of patients overcome obstacles, and I've also used it to help banish my own thought demons. Usually, it takes about 100 work sheets to make it an automatic process you can do in your head. I've found it truly helps develop a stronger sense of self."

Daniel Amen, MD, is a physician and psychiatrist. He is the author of *Magnificent Mind at Any Age*.

**4** **Push Through Adversity as Quickly as You Can**  
 "My life changed on April 12, 1984, when I stepped on a land mine during a camping trip in Israel," says Jerry White. "I was 25. I lost part of my leg and spent six months in the hospital. I confess, the first time I was put in a wheelchair, I just sat there and waited for someone to push me. And when I looked at my nurse, she looked down at me, laughed, and said, 'If you want to move, push.' So I did. And I continue to do so. The point is that determination is required to build resilience, and it's a discipline you can strengthen. Each person we work with in the Survivor Corps, an organization that helps survivors of war and terror, must devise his or her own recovery action plan with specific objectives. They must be SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. Experts at the American Psychology Association concur: Action and movement are essential for resilience. You must move toward your goals and take decisive actions. A new field of research is revealing that positive outcomes—growing stronger through a crisis—are not all that uncommon. There's even a new term for it: post-traumatic growth."

Jerry White is a leader in the International Campaign to Ban Land Mines, co-recipient of the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize, executive director of Survivor Corps, and author of *I Will Not Be Broken*.

**5** **Seek Out Opportunities in Times of Change**  
 "This is how I view the big bang of 2008," says career coach and media executive Gil Schwartz. "Once upon a time, dinosaurs ruled the earth. They had enormous, scary teeth and always got a very big bonus come dinnertime. Then the world changed. A comet hit the planet just south of Schenectady, New York, or something like that, and all of a sudden the world was no longer a congenial place for big, scaly lizards that ate up everything in their paths. The good news for mammals is this: After all the T. rexes were dead and gone, the planet was suddenly more habitable for smaller, softer life-forms, like us. The key for people who walk upright and have opposable thumbs is to make the most of the vacancies left in your power structure by the departure of the roaring carnivores, as well as by the smaller creatures that attended to them. In spite of the fact that many are gone, the need for work in all areas has not diminished. Aggressive, opportunistic,

ambitious guys like you can cast a wide net and scoop up all kinds of responsibilities. And with responsibilities come new titles, new client relationships, and even, in the end, new money. Remember this: The one predator that has survived from the days when dinosaurs ruled the earth is the shark. That's because no matter what, it always, always keeps moving forward, eating as it goes. You do the same: Always keep moving, sharpening your skills, seizing new opportunities, and you'll do all right."

Gil Schwartz is an executive vice president at a Fortune 500 company and Best Life's career coach.

**6** **Build a Support Team for Change**  
 "I use the verb *proact* on a regular basis now, especially at work and in a strategic context," says Simon Sinek, a corporate consultant and expert in inspiration. "Proacting is an alternative to reacting. When we react, we look backward, but when we proact, we look forward. No matter the situation, I want proaction to be the primary strategy. The impact is profound. It's optimistic, it's productive, and it encourages people to come together. As it applies to change in your career, proacting means staying in touch with former clients you had successful relationships with and attending meetings of professional or trade groups. Proacting is not complaining about what you hate—that's too easy. When you proact, you start taking steps to find the job you really want. I'm a great believer that when people are unhappy at work, they should tell their bosses or go to human resources. Explain why you are not feeling fulfilled. Give them constructive feedback so they can help you get more out of your job, which, in turn, will help them get more out of you."

Simon Sinek is the founder of Sinek Partners and teaches strategic communications at Columbia University.

**7** **Follow Your Internal Compass**  
 "About 12 years ago, I left a very good job working at the White House, writing speeches for Al Gore," says Daniel H. Pink. "I quit that job without having a new job because I wanted to work for myself as a writer in the attic of my dinky little house in Washington, D.C. Lots of people thought I was nuts. But if I took time to think about what others thought, I never would have done it. You have to learn to navigate by an internal compass, and not an external one. By that I mean you make career decisions for fundamental reasons (because you think it's inherently valuable, regardless of what it may or may not lead to) versus instrumental reasons (because you think it's going to lead to something else, regardless of whether you enjoy it or think it's worthwhile). There's a deep sense of liberation when you embrace that, when you find what you're put on the planet to do. To achieve success in your work—or other pursuits—you need to find true meaning."

Daniel H. Pink is the author of *A Whole New Mind*.

## 7 Flat



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Mehmet Oz, MD, 48, is a professor of surgery at Columbia University and the author of *You: Being Beautiful*.

"Every morning, I do sun salutations, a series of four yoga poses. After each pose, I do 20 push-ups, and then I add 20 more at the end for a total of 100 push-ups. I also do four sets of 15 pull-ups at least four times a week. I don't bulk up as much as I would by lifting weights, but it helps create long, lean muscles. Plus, it's free and I can do it anywhere."