

Book reviews

Title: Rethinking Retirement for Positive Ageing

Author: Dr. Denise Taylor

Publisher: Routledge 2023

224 pages

ISBN: 978-1-032-44847-3 (Paperback)

Reviewed by **Dr Michelle Stewart**, Independent Careers Consultant.

For many, our lives become immersed in work and family with little opportunity to plan our own future. Children move on. Work commitments change. Retirement is suddenly upon us or fast approaching. We may wonder 'What kind of life stretches ahead of us?' In this book the author, a career psychologist, award-winning career coach and published author, offers ways to help us to explore this unknown landscape; to understand who we are and what we want; to retain a sense of purpose and meaning in our lives. Based on her doctoral research, Denise addresses the personal challenges we can encounter as we enter this time of transition and renewal, inviting the reader to reflect on retirement as a process.

For those who are themselves facing retirement or working with clients towards the end of their working life, this book is a timely addition to our bookshelves. Clearly written and easily accessible, it reveals how a meaningful life is more than career success, or money in the bank (financial well-being). Essential to a belief that we matter, and our lives can make difference is a healthy relationship with ourselves and meaningful connections with others. Retirement can lead us to feel 'unmoored'. This practical guide to retirement helps us to find meaning in life and identify our purpose as we enter uncharted waters.



Title: Change your story

Author: Carolyn Parry, FRSA, FHEA, RCDP, founder and lead coach of Career Alchemy, and former President of the Career Development Institute

Publisher: Wisdom Publishing, 2023

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Price: Signed hardback giftset £25 / Signed paperback signed giftset £19 plus postage direct from <https://www.careeralchemy.co.uk/store/c8/BOOKS.html>

Prices via Amazon: Paperback £14.99; eBook £9.99, Hardback £19.99

Reviewed by **Dr Michelle Stewart**, NICEC Fellow.

Change your story by Carolyn Parry was inspired by her own experience of changing career direction, and is grounded in her considerable expertise and learning as a career coach working with early-stage and established professionals of all ages and backgrounds. The book is designed to inspire and enable the reader to take control of their life and create the working life they want. Its aim is encapsulated in the phrase a 'voyage of discovery towards a purpose driven life'.

The book is broken into four parts. Part one: 'Understanding your story' and Part two: 'Developing your story', are structured around the career stories of eight individuals, each illustrating an aspect of the learning journey. These stories help the reader to gain personal insight and to learn effectively. They are complemented by a series of career-related activities underpinned by theory and research. Part three: 'Achieving your story' offers strategies for success and well-being. Having established a sense of purpose that aligns with your core values, abilities and long term vision, this section addresses how that goal might be best achieved; that is, what to do next to move forward.

Part four is structured around the United Nations' seventeen Sustainable Development Goals. Carolyn defines each in turn, identifying key factors and related occupations. Beyond broadening the scope of possible job roles for the reader, this section lends itself to career practitioners supporting clients wanting to identify opportunities to develop their career and 'make a difference' in the world.

Accompanying the book is the author's 'INSPIRED' career and life planner. This enables the reader to chart their own career development, providing a strong sense of who they really are and the difference that is uniquely theirs to make – presenting career purpose and fulfilment. Independent research by iCeGS has demonstrated that the planner creates clarity of direction and confidence in 'getting there'.

On first reading I was a little overawed by the contributors' stories. All appeared to be high achievers, undaunted by the challenges life threw at them. All were determined, resilient and successful. Yet, certain aspects resonated with my own experiences; a sense of order and happenstance amidst life's uncertainty, offering an inner sense that I too could change my story. I was challenged by their curiosity, their spirit of adventure and openness to learning, even from failure; 'sometimes things have to fall apart to make way for new beginnings'. I was inspired by their willingness to take calculated risk. A theme running through the stories were 'light-bulb' moments, identifying work that left them feeling 'charged-up' or 'set-alight'. It was clear from the narratives that finding purpose – 'whether to help change the world or the world for one person' – came with a sense of being alive.

We all need to make sense of our working lives and vocational identity. The power of this book is that it provides a means of becoming conscious of the career we really want from life and to use our strengths to contribute to something in the world bigger than we are, while simultaneously treating ourselves with kindness rather than judgement. If you are interested in actively deciding on your own story and understanding the difference you are here to make – it's never too late to begin and this book is a great place to start.