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A Midlife Transformation Toward Fulfillment

Dianne Bischoff James



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by CARRIE JACKSON



Dianne Bischoff James is an award-winning writer, motivational speaker, Screen Actors Guild actress, cheerleading coach and entrepreneur who conducts Midlife Reboot workshops around the country. Prior to her 38th birthday, the Chicago-based James identified as a wife, mother, and business professional, and was fighting depression every day. A visit with gifted intuitive and teacher Sonia Choquette gave her the insight to a future life that was waiting for her, and James underwent a self-imposed life transformation. Her first book, *The Real Brass Ring: Change Your Life Course Now*, chronicles her journey from struggles and heartache to well-being.

How did you decide to make such a dramatic life change?

I grew up in a traditional American family, and my parents were post-Depression babies. It was understood that I had three options—be a doctor, a lawyer or an engineer, and none of those worked for me. I ended up being a “rebel” and pursued a master’s degree from Northwestern University in marketing communication instead. I had the three kids, the mini-mansion across from the lake, I was well programmed and successful in my marketing consulting business and I was miserable.

In a one-hour reading with Sonia, I was told that everything in my life was wrong, including my career, mate, heartfelt interests, and my body was breaking down with excessive weight. She nailed me to the wall and told me that if I didn’t grab the brass ring soon, it’s going to be too late, and I would be miserable for the rest of my

life. She told me I was meant to be an actor, author, teacher and share my stories to help others. I was in shock, and cried for an hour in the car. Then I decided to get moving.

What were the first steps you took?

I got clever and determined. I attended a seven-day intensive retreat at the Hoffman Institute, which was essentially emotional rehabilitation. When I came back, my depression had lifted and I felt like a new person. I had not been on stage since high school, but decided at 40 to audition for a community theater role, and I fell in love and made a commitment to becoming a professional actor.

My first role was in a performance of *Oliver*, and I was totally elated. We had to dance for two months during rehearsals, and the extra weight I was carrying fell off. I shed 50 pounds and have kept it off ever since. It was then I became aware I had developed bad patterns with food. I was surviving on

sugar and caffeine. Now I pay attention to what my body really needs and wants, and I don't let myself munch mindlessly at night anymore. I figuratively lock the refrigerator at 7 p.m., and when I wake up in the morning, I'm hungry to have a really great breakfast.

I also pored over every metaphysical and self-help book I could get my hands on.

The Brass Ring is a compilation of ideas from everything you read. Which stand out the most?

Since I have such a strong business background, I call it an executive summary of ideas—what would be the takeaway of thousands of self-help books. The approach is pragmatic metaphysics; a beautiful combination of Eastern and Western philosophies. It's a little bit hippie, with a focus on creativity, spirit and a connection to Mother Earth, but there's also a practical side to stay honest, active and engaged. One of the most important ideas is that anything you think about, talk about, pay attention to or focus on is coming your way. If you tell yourself, "I'm never going to get that project," then you probably won't. I you think, "Today is going to be a hard day," then it will be. You have to mind your thoughts, your words and your actions, and write down clearly what you want, because writing is the initial manifestation of what's to come.

What else is important for someone that wants to lead an authentic life?

I highlight the Shortcuts for Happy Living, 14 of the most important ideas in my book. These include listening to your emotional radar detector, speaking your peace and managing your circle. Your emotional radar detector lets you know if anything feels strange or uncomfortable. Pay attention to

that. Move away from things that don't feel good and move towards things that lift you up. Speaking your peace is about really honoring your truth and not saying something just because you think it's what other people want to hear.

Managing your circle means not just worrying about everybody else. Get out of everyone else's business and let them manage themselves. Also, take time to focus on the relationships and people that are most important and valuable to you. We all have "light touch" friends, who you know won't be available when times are tough. Those should not be the people in your inner circle. Now I choose to be with people who are moving towards empowered transformation, and that's the kind of energy that builds me up. That's what I'm attracted to.



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