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SERVING CHARLOTTE AND THE METROPOLITAN AREA

Is the dream you deferred now your dream denied?

As Lucy took her puppy through his paces at obedience school, she realized this stray was helping define her life. She not only had made time for this puppy but also was learning to make time for family, friends, community and even a partner.

Six months ago none of this was possible. Six months ago, Lucy (not her real name) was working 80 hours a week. Six months ago, Lucy's mother didn't recognize her in the store. Six months ago Lucy didn't know the difference between New York and Charlotte. And six months ago, Lucy was unsure what a partner was, let alone whether she wanted one. At 35, she was happy that most of her "turbulent thirties" were behind her!

During the '80s, Lucy's parents paid for her Ivy League education and the Audi so that she could visit them, and they clothed and supported her when she chose to attend business school immediately after graduation. After all, wasn't her MBA the ticket to having her pick of careers and companies? She watched older siblings and upper classmates graduate and achieve their "stardom" and six-figure salaries in lightning speed. This was Lucy's dream and she was willing to pay the price.

After graduation, Lucy was seduced by the world of investment banking. She excelled in a management training program and was on the "fast track." Her life was full of voice mails, faxes, e-mails and meeting with clients all day long, while the answering machine talked to family, friends and would-be partners. Her expense account often matched the GDP of many Third World countries. Despite the occasional bout with the blues — which she could reme-

dy with a bit of partying — this meteoric rise up the career ladder was fine with her — and everyone in her life.

Lucy had built the network to support her career choice. By all standards, she was fabulously successful — owning a



Earning a Living; living a life

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condominium, dining at the best restaurants, and taking extravagant ski and spa vacations. She was also very lonely. She questioned whether she was using any of her natural abilities at work or simply relying on a skill set that she had finely tuned so that she could "swim with the sharks." Commendations, promotions, added responsibilities, and all the other aspects of her job brought her no satisfaction. She enjoyed connecting with people and yet "running the numbers" had her spending less and less time with clients. She was bored — the novelty of each new deal had worn off as each new deal looked more like the last one. She was enslaved by the very career that was designed to set her free.

Suddenly in her early 30s, she questioned whether this career was right for her. Lucy recalls that three years ago, when she first felt uneasy with her career and her life, she jumped at the opportunity to "start anew" in Charlotte. The move helped in some ways, but ultimately, starting anew would send ripples throughout her life.

Lucy is not alone. Many people of her generation are faced with these same issues. Her generation, according to Gail

Sheehy in *New Passages*, has spent their 20s building on dreams of fame and fortune that often have turned into nightmares. In many cases, the generation was prepared to forego the joy of family, friends and partners for the chance at the brass ring. By their 30s, however, they began questioning their career choices.

When starting anew, this generation often looks, perhaps for the first time, at whether the dream that they have deferred is now a dream that will be denied them. They look for the "natural fit" of their abilities, skills, style and interests rather than just money, power and prestige in career choices. They also want to balance their career with their desire for deeper commitment and family. Once they define the important aspects of this new career, they can create a meaningful new career vision for themselves.

And where is Lucy today? She truly has "started anew." She changed companies. She is successful by any standards, but now has time for herself, her community and new friends. Her new job looks like the old one, but she is encouraged to place greater emphasis on time for client interactions which in the long run gets her repeat business, and she feels like she has slowed her pace so that she has the time she needs to get the job done and, more importantly, she has time for all of her life.

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