

Transition tips

Helpful information

BY LAUREN GORDON

Our New York career counselor answers questions frequently asked by dancers. If you have questions that may help other dancers, please email us your inquiries at info@careertransition.org.

Q. I have just been laid off from my job but still have many good dancing years ahead of me. Are there jobs I can take that will pay the bills, allow me time to audition, but not involve me chucking hash?

File for unemployment if you can. Then research with your state Workforce Career Center—ServiceLocator.org— or the job bank in your local library for available employment. Check in with the organization's counselors and the job book in our New York and Los Angeles resource centers. The Actors Work Program, local job search groups, Craigslislist.org, twitter.com/Getdancejobs and bulletin boards in dance studios are usually helpful in these situations as well. Looking for "survival work" as we call it, is usually most helpful as it provides you with income but leaves you flexible enough for auditioning and taking class. Consider late hour work, or part-time and temp positions. Before looking for work, identify skills you already have and enjoy. Brush up on your Pilates or fitness training knowledge. If you can cook, find work in a kitchen. If you can sew, fix computers, walk dogs, take quality photographs, teach a skill, houseclean, tutor or work in a school program, you have multiplied your chances to get work that will help pay the bills and keep your dance career on track.

Q. I am a freelance dancer who does not have health insurance. With my limited and unstable income, what's your suggestion for finding an affordable plan?

For state by state insurance options and health care resources, the Artist Health Insurance Resource Center—AHIRC.org—is a must for all performing artists. The Actors Fund has ongoing seminars in New York, Los Angeles and helps people over the phone. If you left work that had health insurance, COBRA can provide at least 18 months of coverage. You might also be eligible for Federal Stimulus 2/3 premium costs if you've been laid off. There are several ways to obtain low cost, consumer savvy insurance through artist organizations such as Fractured Atlas, the Freelancers Union, and Media Bistro. Entertainment union members should check regulations for eligibility updates. If you're in college, even part-time, check with the school or a student association to see if you are eligible for coverage. For prescription coverage or chronic care needs, try PPARx.org or ADAP, for illness specific assistance. For those dancers who have minimal income, find out about Medicaid, or programs like Healthy New York and Family Health Plus. Though not perfect, there is something affordable out there for everyone.

Q. I am a retired professional dancer and have been raising my children for many years. What's your best advice for getting back into the workforce while acquiring new skills for today's job market?

Start by brainstorming and imagining what you want to do. Career assessment tests may also be valuable to get a base line of interests, skills, and compatibility; so contact one of our career counselors. Consider your values and level of education. How much or how minimal training is needed for a new job? For some, job search and resume writing alone may be a good step as everyone may not want or need additional training. Certificate programs,

workshops, online classes, or starting a business may also be options. When you update your resumes—functional or chronological depending on what you're pursuing—any teaching, retail, philanthropy, fundraising, volunteer, pro-bono, and/or PTA work can be considered as a legitimate skill and experience set. Finally, use your lifetime of networks and contacts to see what immediate options you have.

Q. I have many years of performing ahead of me before I retire or even think about changing careers. What can I do for myself now that won't take away from my dancing?

Dancers are multifaceted, have among the most adaptable skills of any profession and are amazing at multitasking. Don't forget that in many cases adding a new skill to your portfolio will also enhance your performing. Career transition research has shown that successful transitions are easier to manage by preparing. So brainstorm to think about what you want to do five, ten, 20 years down the road and see what action steps you will need to take along the way. Also, be curious about what interests you have outside of just performing. Childhood dreams, a cool business idea, cooking skills, knowledge of a second language, experience in yoga, photography, choreography, writing, traveling, are all things that can help you develop a successful and passionate second career. Finally, talk with others, use the organization's National Career Network online, read or go to an educational workshop or short class, shadow someone, or identify skills to upgrade or learn. Even while on tour it's doable to take the next step. Many of our dancers try their ideas while on the road. Some have even started businesses during intermission in their dressing rooms.

And remember, Career Transition For Dancers is the connection to your future.

The organization's resource centers, online resources, support groups and our dedicated career counselors in Los Angeles (Linda Bunch) and Chicago (Maryellen Langhout) are always available to help. If you have questions, please make an appointment or send us an email. Lastly, take advantage of all the free resources available online. Never forget that you are a dancer, someone in one of the most competitive and challenging professions out there, so you already know how to succeed. Please note: All referenced websites are posted on the Transition Links directory at Careertransition.org.

Stepping into hope and change

A message from our client outreach coordinator

BY KAYLEN RATTO

On April 8, 2010 Career Transition For Dancers will partner with The Harkness Center for Dance Injuries, The Field, Pentacle, and other dance service organizations to address the changing economic climate and provide you with resources that will help your career development.

We are fortunate that the New York division of Actors' Equity Association has donated their 2nd floor conference rooms for the seminar activities. Seminars will be split into three tracks based on dancers' different career needs:

Track 1: Survival work

Short term, immediate bread and butter

Session 1: Help, I need income now! Survival strategies to pay the bills

Learn how to use the interests and adaptable skills you have cultivated as a dancer to find creative and sustainable work immediately. Whether it is for your primary income between gigs or secondary income to make ends meet, the session will give you loads of ideas on how to stay financially afloat.

Session 2: Putting your best self forward: networking, marketing, and entrepreneurial techniques

Learn how to market yourself to get your foot in the door quicker. Using the skills you have developed as a dancer or even at another job, you will learn how to develop a professional identity outside of the concert hall and feel comfortable with promoting yourself in various mediums such as email, new media, online, in-person, etc.

Track 2: Hot careers and exploration

Mid term career exploration, further education

Session 1: What opportunities are out there? A look at hot career areas for future career planning

Learn how to take the experience and skills you already have and get into an industry that is in high demand—as reported by the U.S. Dept. of Labor. We will explore careers in the environment (green jobs), nursing, technology, education, health, fitness, and more. You will learn how vast, promising, and complimentary these careers are for dancers.

Session 2: This year counts! Get a certification/degree in under a year

Are you getting ready to transition or take your interests to the next level? Learn about certifications, degrees, and training programs that take under a year to receive. In addition to pilates and yoga certification, dig deeper to find programs that build on your skills and will accelerate your career.

Track 3: Dancing into a passion-based career

Long term, self exploration

Session 1: Where do I go from here? How do I find my next passion?

Take an inside-out approach to self exploration with a playful approach to tapping into your creative possibilities. Exercises will include fantasy work and creative imagery—all designed in a safe environment to help you think “outside the box” and into your next passion-filled career.

Session 2: I've got my passion! Now, how do I use it?

Learn how to find an energizing career that incorporates your passion with your values, ideal work style, work environment, and even your preferred customers. This is your chance to get all the resources you need to find a “good fit” career.

Check the [National Outreach](#) section of our [Schedule of events](#) page for time, location and details. If you have any other questions or suggestions about the seminar materials, email us at nationaloutreach@careertransition.org, with the subject: **Stepping into hope and change.**

Did you know? Of all performing artists, dancers are in the lowest income bracket, earning less than \$20,000 a year, with just 25% having full-time positions.

Mail call

Letters from our clients

Alicia Graf

Dear Career Transition For Dancers,

Thank you so much for your generous support! I honestly feel like you have been with me on my life's journey since I became a professional dancer in 1996. No other organization has been so gracious about supporting my life outside of dance. Thank you for believing in me.

Much love,
Alicia Graf

Leah Gallimore

Dear Career Transition For Dancers,

I wanted to send you a note thanking you for all that you have done and for all that you will do in the future. I am sure that you already know the impact that the organization has had on the lives of dancers, but I still want to let you know how much I appreciate everything that has been done for me. Your organization really does make a difference and I thank you for all it has made in my life.

Sincerely,
Leah Gallimore

Mahri Relin

Dear Ms. Westerfield:

I want to thank you and AEA for helping contribute to the Newhouse Grant that I was recently awarded. I have begun taking preparation classes for the GRE exam so that I can ultimately attend grad school for clinical psychology. This grant paid for the classes, and I already know that they will help me improve my GRE scores considerably.

As dancers, we often worry that there is very little left for us to do after we choose not to dance professionally anymore. We also have spent so many years sacrificing money for the joy of dancing that many of us worry about having enough resources to make that transition in the first place. The Newhouse Grant makes this transition feel so much more possible.

Thank you for helping me—and the rest of us—move ahead in our lives with more support. I have enjoyed being a part of Actors Equity, and I look forward to my future as a dancer-turned-psychologist!

Warmest,
Mahri Relin

Carol Bryan

Dear Mr. Fayette,

I am most fortunate to be a recent recipient of an entrepreneurial business grant from Career Transition For Dancers. I am so grateful for this organization and have great respect for those who are involved; from the career counselors, to all the speakers they invite to present and for all the resources they provide.

I had a wonderful professional performing career with American Ballet Theatre as an adult and as wonderful a performing career for ten years at the School of American Ballet with NYCB.

I became a client in 1995 when I wanted to stop teaching ballet after a lengthy teaching career of thirty years and didn't know what to do. I certainly felt I had no transferable skills to bring to a different career. I knew I had to go to