

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: