

Episode #9:
Ready for Some Expert Advice? 22 Minutes with Marci Alboher
 (3/24/2018)

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| Intro | Andy Levine | I want you to think about the people you have met that have made a successful transition to a second act. Are there some common traits that they have? |
| | Marci Alboher | <p>I think there are two things. I want to say flexibility and humility.</p> <p>On the flexibility front. So, career transitions never exactly work out the way you think they're going to. And they often take longer than you think they're going to do, and they often have a lot of detours. So, you have to be open and flexible, and often, you may land somewhere on the way.</p> <p>And then, on the humility part, I think for people who've been working for a long time, it's really important to adopt a bit of a beginner's mind when you are trying out something new, when you're thinking about a shift, and to understand you're going to be working from people who are younger than you, who might know more than you do about the area. And maybe you bring great judgment and great wisdom of certain kinds, but you have to have the certain, kind of, humility and hunger to learn.</p> |
| | | INTRO MUSIC |
| Podcast Overview | Andy | <p>Welcome to Second Act Stories, a podcast that looks at people who have made major life changes and are pursuing more rewarding lives in a second act. I'm your host, Andy Levine.</p> <p>On this episode, we're going to mix things up a little. We're going to spend the next twenty minutes with Marci Alboher. Marci is the author of <i>The Encore Career Handbook: How to Make a Living and a Difference in the Second Half of Life</i>. She also is a Vice President at Encore.org, a nonprofit focused on helping people pursue second acts for the greater good.</p> |

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| The Interview | Andy | Well, Marci. We're delighted to have you on the program today, thank you so much for joining us. |
| | Marci | Great to be here, Andy. |
| | Andy | All right. So, I'd like to start out, maybe start out learning a little about your own background and the work you do, sort of, the elevator speech about Marci. So, start with that and then we'll get to Encore.org as well. |
| | Marci | Sure, sure. So, I am a bit of a serial career changer. And it's kind of fitting because my area of interest is the future of work and careers. So, I kind of I'm a poster child for that kind of living. I started out as a corporate lawyer, and then, it was a really bad fit for me and I was always like a big reader and literary type. And I had a mid-career shift and I became a journalist, and then... |
| | Andy | That was at the age of? How old? |
| | Marci | I think in my mid-30's. |
| | Andy | Mid-30's. Okay, good. |
| | Marci | And that was not easy. I took a lot of classes, and I found all these mentors, and I felt like I was learning from all these younger people. When I did that I kind of... I didn't go back for a degree, but I did do a lot of adult education classes. And I live in New York City and it was really easy to find ways to learn, but it was hard to break in. And so, I spent the next decade... I, kind of, do things in decades, it seems. I spent the next decade as a journalist, but really, in that period, I had what I call a "Slash Career" because I was a writer and a speaker, and eventually, a journalism teacher as well. But everything, kind of, fit together pretty nicely. And my beat as a journalist was careers and work. |
| | Andy | And you worked for "The New York Times"? |
| | Marci | Yes. And I worked for "The New York Times"... |
| | Andy | Fantastic publication. |
| | Marci | Yeah. And in that period I wrote my first book which was about Slash Careers. And then, through that work, I started paying attention to an organization which used to be called Civic Ventures, which is now called Encore.org, which was really looking at how the demographics of aging was, kind of, affecting the world of work and life in many ways. And I was very captivated by this idea that our aging population is this |

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| | <p>untapped resource. And that was this idea that was coming out of this group called Encore.org.</p> <p>And at that time, Encore ran something called The Purpose Prize, which was a social innovation prize. They gave \$100,000 prizes to older change makers, social innovators over the age of 60. So, I wrote about that prize for "The New York Times" and I wrote about the founder of the organization, Marc Freedman. And as journalists are want to do, he became a regular source for me, and I started learning a lot about this opportunity of our aging population, in particular, because the baby boomer demographic is so big.</p> <p>How could we be thinking about ways to tap the talent of the aging baby boomer population and provide new models for work for people as they age? They're very purpose-oriented and that, kind of, take advantage of what happens when we age, how we can use our experience and...</p> <p>So, I got very enamored of that idea, wrote about it a bunch for "The New York Times" and eventually, went to go work for this organization, Encore.org.</p> |
| Andy | And how long ago was that, that you started working at Encore? |
| Marci | That was about eight years ago. |
| Andy | For our listeners, just give me a snapshot of Encore and what Encore does. I am a member so I know, but I want to make sure others know. |
| Marci | Sure, sure. So, Encore.org is a national nonprofit. We're a virtual organization. We have about 28 people. And we innovate about new ways to tap the aging population, really, like the 50-plus population, for social good. And we do that in three different ways. So, we are elevating a new story about purpose and impact in the second half of life, we're also incubating new models for how to work in later life, and we are also, kind of, the hub of an emerging movement of individual leaders and organizations that are interested in this issue. |
| Andy | That sounds like a lot of work. You must be 28 people who are very busy. |
| Marci | We're very busy, but we partner with a lot of people, like you here. |
| Andy | Okay, that's good. That's good. And just a "thank you" from me and my podcast. You guys have been extremely helpful to me in getting off the ground. A lot of the people I am interviewing are connected to Encore and part of your story- |

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| | | <p>series. Say just a quick moment about that because I think there's an interesting relationship there.</p> |
| | <p>Marci</p> | <p>Yeah, a big part of our work, since we began, has been around using storytelling to help change the culture, and to inspire people to think differently about what you can do with your experience. And so, our tagline is "Second acts for the greater good." And often, it's a second act, or third act, or fourth act. I mean, life is long and a lot of people are, kind of, reinventing instead of retiring. And that's kind of our sweet spot. And we're particularly interested in stories of people who are using their talents and experience to help society in some way. That's our sweet spot.</p> |
| | <p>Andy</p> | <p>So, I want to walk through kind of the stages of a second act. You've spoken to, met with, written about a lot of different people who've been through this. You've been through this yourself. But I want to just, sort of, walk you through different stages. So, I want to start at the beginning. In the different cases that you've observed, what are these primary motivations for someone considering a career change or as I like to call it, a "second act"?</p> |
| | <p>Marci</p> | <p>And a career change to me is a little different than a second act because I think there's something happens when we hit, kind of, midlife, where the reasons we change careers or are looking for something new are kind of particular. So...</p> |
| | <p>Andy</p> | <p>Let's stick with the second act element of it than, sort of, the, I guess, the "later in life" you would call it. So, go ahead.</p> |
| | <p>Marci</p> | <p>Yeah. So one is like this "Is this the all there is," kind of, reflection. You know, as you get older and you really start feeling that life is shorter, there's a real sense of things you've wanted to do that you haven't done yet. So I think that's a very common thing that gives you some urgency at this time period.</p> <p>So, many, many people that I talk to feel like what they were doing that it's not even possible to continue in it any longer. Their industry is changed, they were laid off, the work they used to do is being done in a whole new way, and their choice is to either, kind of, learn the new way or take the time to do something different. So, I think there's a lot of people who said, you know, "I didn't choose to change careers. It chose me." So, that there's that aspect. It's very, very common.</p> <p>And I think there's just also the, kind of, you discover something. You discover a new passion. So, you have this urge to turn a hobby into a career or to turn what you do in your volunteer life into your main identity. I see that happening all the time.</p> |

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| | | <p>And looking at you, like, we're here in your office where you have a day job, and then you do this podcast and you're really good at it.</p> |
| | Andy | <p>Thank you, thank you.</p> |
| | Marci | <p>Like, you could decide like maybe this becomes your fulltime identity.</p> |
| | Andy | <p>Gotcha, gotcha.</p> |
| | Marci | <p>So, going back to that "Is this all", kind of, element that you mentioned, is there a sweet spot in terms of people's age that that tends to hit them that you see, or is it kind of all over the map?</p> <p>So, I think, a lot more in stage than age because people are.... One thing that's really interesting is that there are so many patterns for how we live our life now, that we used to have this one pattern right? You know, you went to school, you maybe partnered up and had a family, if you went down that route, you had your career, you think about retiring. And then, I mean, it was just, kind of, like, lockstep, right?</p> |
| | Andy | <p>And you want to play golf on a golf course like in South Florida, right?</p> |
| | Marci | <p>Right, exactly. And there are now many, many ways that can all play out. We now do lifelong learning. You know, those of us who want to stay in the game are constantly going back to school, constantly, you know, thinking about how to retrain and rescale. It doesn't just happen at the beginning of your life. There's career change is really ubiquitous. We all, kind of, are reinventing and, you know, the average person today has five or six, you know, jobs in their lifetime, not, you know, the 30-year, kind of, stay with one organization.</p> <p>So, it's very hard to say "one," you know, kind of, life stage. But I do think something seems to happen for people who are in their late 40's or early 50's where they start thinking. People used to plan for retirement and I think it's... So either you can't afford to retire or you can't imagine retiring. So, I do think if you're not going to retire there's now this 30-year period ahead of you. That could be as long as the career you've already had. And I think a lot of people take stock around that age and start thinking, "Wow, what am I going to do for this next length?"</p> <p>And one interesting group that I would say I met when I did a lot of touring around on my book is, one group that I think for whom this can be a little different is people, mostly women, who took time off to become full-time parents. I think, often, I find at this age, some of those women are re-entering the</p> |

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| | | <p>workforce and it's, kind of, their first time, kind of, like, you know, they may not have had a long time working before they stopped to stay at home. And, you know, for them it's like they have a whole career ahead of them when they come back. This life stage is also people are taking time off to caregiving on the other end for a partner or a parent or someone else who's ill.</p> |
| Andy | | <p>Good points, good points. So, if we go to the next stage, which is maybe someone has... They've been thinking about it, they're motivated. How would you advise them about the exploring of a making a change and, sort of, you know, you sort of said it yourself, "I know I want to do something different but I don't know what." How should someone explore that?</p> |
| Marci | | <p>So, again, there's no right order for this, but I think it does have three parts. It's the kind of research and, kind of, exploration of ideas part. And then, there's the trying stuff out part. So you can do both of them in a lot of different ways and, kind of, concurrently. So, if you're a linear type, this could be hard to follow, but just imagine that if you don't know what it is you want to do you have to do some stuff that's in your head and stuff that's out in the world. So in your head or on your screen is researching and, you know, visiting, kind of, you know, reading up on areas that interest you. You could do it through reading books, you could do it through subscribing to newsletters or through researching and reading on websites that are relevant to the areas that you're interested in. And, eventually, you should start talking to people who do the stuff that you're exploring.</p> |
| | | <p>So, how do you do that? You could ask somebody if you could visit them where they work. You could do a shadow with someone. You could do an informational interview. You could offer up yourself as a volunteer, and so you could do formal volunteering or you can say do any projects that would be appropriate for me if you're getting closer to something that feels interesting to you.</p> |
| Andy | | <p>We're going to talk about the "Encore Career Handbook," but I know in the book you talk a lot about volunteering and feeling that's a really powerful way to test out a path.</p> |
| Marci | | <p>Sure. And it's a, kind of, you're multitasking when you're volunteering. So, I always say, like, the best thing you could do at this, kind of, in this process is to give yourself away in some ways. First of all, if you find something you're passionate about, you're going to have a good time, right? You're going to be doing something that makes you feel good, it makes you feel purpose-oriented. And you could also do anything from bite-size to very immersive volunteering. You could do a one-shot where you go to your local food bank and, you know, do</p> |

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| | | <p>something very hands-on with a finite period of time. You can join a board or an advisory group up sometime where you have a repeated exposure to an organization or an issue you care about and get to use various skills that you have in different ways.</p> <p>So, finding the right kind of volunteer opportunity that fits in your current life, but also allows you to, kind of, inch your way into a new world. And if you don't know what you want to do and you want to try out a few different things, you could also be, kind of, a volunteer tourist and try out several different things to see both what kind of organization, what kind of setting you want to be in.</p> <p>You know, I think another thing that happens in a lot of this life stages, setting matters a lot. So...</p> |
| Andy | | So you can move somewhere else of the world? |
| Marci | | Well, I was thinking not just geography, but do you want to work in an office or do you want to work in nature? Do you want to work with other people? And do you want to work one-on-one or do you want to work in a very dynamic group setting with lots of colleagues? So, I think those things are really important to think about. And you probably know yourself well enough to be able to answer those questions. |
| Andy | | How about going back to school? Do you see that as a key element for a number of people? |
| Marci | | <p>Huge element for a number of people. So there's two ways to think about that too. One is there are now some programs that you could go back to school to actually help you figure out your encore transition. And we're sitting here in New York and there's actually a program here in New York that was founded by someone affiliated with us at Encore, an Encore Transition Program, and it's offered at Union Theological Seminary. And a few of these have sprung up around the country, and that's actually designed for people who want to take a semester. It's almost like a gap year for grown-ups and you can actually, kind of, explore. And this is very particular. It's for people who want to do social justice work in their encore. But that's one way to, kind of, use an academic, almost, experience to create a period for yourself to reflect and think about things.</p> <p>Most people go back to school when they already know what they want to do and they want to fill in some gaps, or they need a new credential, or they need actual, formal training to do what they want to do. So, you know, and school could be anything from an online class, to an X-number of our certifications, like a yoga certification, to a full-on degree, a master's or even a PhD.</p> |

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| | Andy | <p>As so you look at exploring some other path, that sort of thing. And I found this in the people I've interviewed thus far for Second Act stories. One of the issues that comes up is finances and the ability to, you know, maybe you're making a lot of money in a job and you have a certain amount of money, it gives you a cushion, and I can take a year and I can try to figure this out. Is it harder if you don't have that cushion, if you don't have that financial backing behind you?</p> |
| | Marci | <p>I think it's essential to think about your financial planning when you do this. I always say, like, instead of retirement planning people should be doing on encore planning. So, what does this phase of life look like? And what kind of work do you want to do? And then, how can you get yourself there? So, if you're still working, how can you start to put aside the savings that would allow you to make the transition and maybe the investment in yourself you need to make? So, to fund whatever retraining you need, to fund a period of exploration and looking for a new position. And that takes time. So, I think it's really important to figure out, you know, do you have to relocate to make this all work for yourself? If you're really going to take a pay-cut, should you be thinking about living in a different way?</p> <p>And for many people, this kind of transition coincides with having an empty nest. So, do you still need to live where you were living for the last, you know, X years of your life? For people who are thinking about it... Well, I'll stop there.</p> |
| | Andy | <p>I want you to think about the people you have met that have made a successful transition to a second act. Are there some common traits that they have, things about them that, I don't know, you, sort of, observe that you think are, you know, part of the success formula for a second act? Anything stand out to you about that?</p> |
| | Marci | <p>I think the number one... I think there are two things. I want to say flexibility and humility.</p> <p>On the flexibility front. So, career transitions never exactly work out the way you think they're going to. And they often take longer than you think they're going to do, and they often have a lot of detours, which is why, like, I loved it when they designed this "Encore Career Handbook." It has a lot of, like, roadmap images. And it's because you're on a journey and you can't really know where it's going to land you at the end.</p> <p>So, you have to be open and flexible, and often, you may land somewhere on the way. Like, you may just take a detour and that's where you end up. So, I think it's really important to understand that it's not going to be linear.</p> |

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| | | <p>And then, on the humility part, I think for people who've been working for a long time, it's really important to adopt a bit of a beginner's mind when you are trying out something new, when you're thinking about a shift, and to understand you're going to be working from people who are younger than you, who might know more than you do about the area. And maybe you bring great judgment and great wisdom of certain kinds, but you have to have the certain, kind of, humility and hunger to learn. I think of the movie, "Intern" captured this so well.</p> |
| | Andy | Brilliant movie. Loved that movie. |
| | Marci | Right, we love that movie. |
| | | <p>And I think the generic character really inhabited this idea of, you know, he let his experience be discovered. He didn't jump in to being the, kind of, guru at the onset. He allowed that he was in an environment that was new to him. He had to learn the rules and learn the culture. And he did over time, and he shined. And he let himself be discovered, which I think is a brilliant way of doing it.</p> |
| | Andy | <p>I want to go back to your book. We talked a little about earlier, of the "Encore Career Handbook." I bought this maybe a year ago. I found it to be a very, very valuable resource. How did you go about writing this? And what do you think, you know, how can it be a resource to people that are thinking about a change?</p> |
| | Marci | <p>So, when I did this book, I did two things. One is Encore the organization. I was already involved with Encore when I started writing this book, and the beauty is we had a network all over the country of people doing encore careers.</p> <p>So, I had leads all over the place of people to interview. And I interview people all over the country. I travel a lot. And so, the book is very geographically diverse, and we were striving for diversity of all kinds. People doing various kinds of work, from various kinds of backgrounds, in various kinds of geographies.</p> <p>So, interviewing, you know, scores of people. I think I interviewed about 150 people for the book. And the idea was to find common trends, and as you said, kind of, what worked for most people and try to distill it to a set of usable principles.</p> <p>So, that was a whole idea we were trying to, kind of, figure out because there aren't... It's not any roadmap for what you're supposed to do when you go through a career transition. So, the idea was to create a guide that anybody who is trying to go through this kind of transition could follow.</p> |

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| | Andy | It's a very well done book. It's absolutely excellent. So, I want to conclude asking with a personal question of you. So, you've been a lawyer, you've been a journalist, you've been a writer, you've been a nonprofit leader. You've done many of these things, sometimes simultaneously. If you had to talk about... We won't call it your second act because it sounds like your third, fourth, and maybe fifth act. If you were looking at doing something completely different, you know, 5 years, 10 years from now, is there anything that stands out in your head that, you know, something you haven't done that would be completely different that is on your mind, perhaps, somewhere down the line? |
| | Marci | Yeah. So, a couple of things. So, you know, right now I do a lot of work that involves media and that means that I'm on the computer a lot. I'm on social media, I'm on email all day, I'm looking at my screen quite a lot. So... |
| | Andy | I hear you, sister, on this one. So, okay. |
| | Marci | So, my fantasy is to have an encore that doesn't involve a lot of computer time at all, but that involves working with people in a very one-on-one way. And it's tricky because I think so many occupations these days have, you know, a lot of involvement with screen-time. I'm also really interested in holistic health. That's been a passion of mine for a while. So, I could imagine there are these new roles. I talk about this particular role in the book a lot. They're like holistic health counselor or a wellness coach. And that's kind of intriguing to me. Although I recently went to see one of those holistic, health person, and what did they do? They opened up their screen because we had a look at, you know, we were looking at nutrition supplements, and like the whole meeting was like involving a screen, so. |
| | Andy | We can't escape the computer, can we? |
| | Marci | I know. No. |
| | Andy | I think that's a good place to leave at, Marci. Thank you so much for coming in. Great speaking to you and thank you for your help in helping me launch this podcast. Greatly appreciated. |
| | Marci | My pleasure. |

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| Thank-You and Show Credits | Andy | <p>So that is a wrap on Episode 9 of "Second Act Stories." Our special thanks to both Marci Alboher and the entire team at Encore.org. They have been enormously helpful in getting "Second Act Stories" launched.</p> <p>Next week, we'll go back to our customary profile of individuals pursuing more rewarding lives in a second act. We have some great episodes scheduled for the weeks ahead including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A former chemist who decided to try stand-up comedy (at the age of 81); • A successful entrepreneur who the first ten years of his adult life in prison for aggravated assault; • A former advertising executive who launched a unique company called "Sock Problems." They design and sell colorful socks with 25-50% of each sale going to a specific charity partner. <p>We hope you'll keep listening. There are many second act stories that we'll be sharing with you in the weeks and months ahead.</p> |