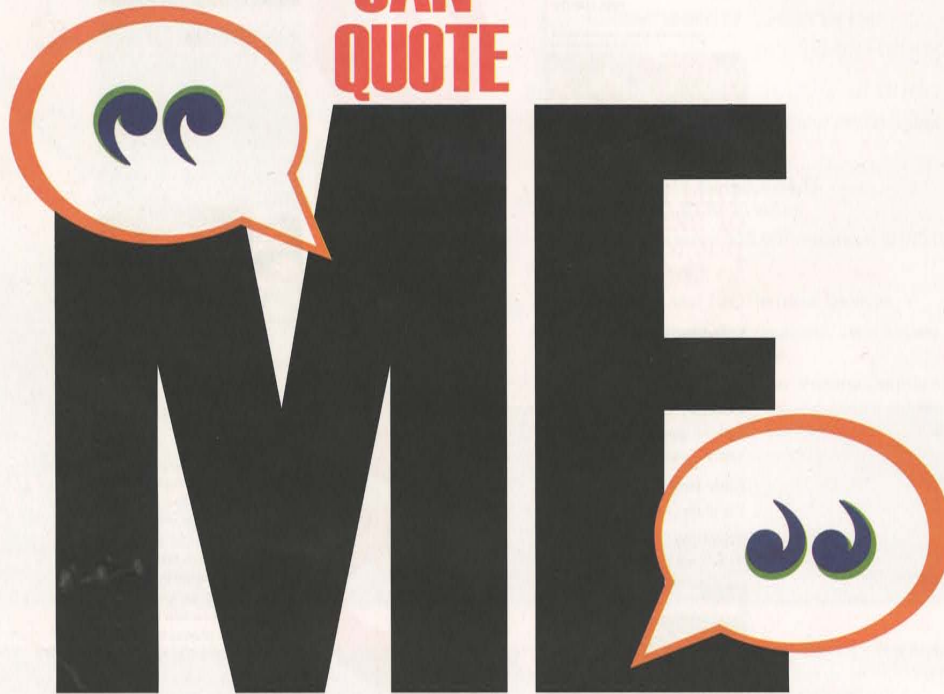


YOU
CAN
QUOTE



... I feared for my mental health
if I didn't get out of this soul-stifling environment.

Giulietta Nardone

When my research department

moved from one end of the office building to the other, everyone jockeyed to get a desk near the windows. Not me. I chose the desk no one wanted way back in the corner. I preferred privacy to a view. Not that I got much privacy. My micro-managing supervisor invaded my personal space daily. He peered over my shoulder watching my keystrokes, wanted to know my every move, called me into his office constantly to question my actions. Once I got dragged back to his lair from in front of the elevator at 5pm on a Friday.

"Come to my office," he ordered. "I want to discuss next week's objectives." Talk about feeling like a caged wild animal. I daydreamed of escape.

Unfortunately, the career ladder I counted on climbing kept losing rungs. Government cuts reduced the number of available statistics positions and I faced a shrinking pool of jobs in a bumpy economy. I wasn't married. No opportunities existed for me to quit and fall back on a mate's salary until the job market picked up. Yet, I feared for my mental health if I didn't get out of this soul-stifling environment.

Hope arrived in the form of a 3x5 index card left abandoned on the subway seat next to me. I don't usually touch other people's refuse, but something told me to pick it up and turn it over. Typed on it was "You must do the things you think you cannot do." Eleanor Roosevelt.

I figured Eleanor's feisty spirit was trying to tell me something, so I stuffed the card in my purse. When I got to work, I taped it onto the scuffed beige wall next to my desk. Even if nothing came of it, her words hid a wall badly in need of a paint job. Later that day, one of my colleagues stopped by my desk and noticed the quote. "I've always loved that one," she said. "Here's another good one by Erica Jong, 'And the trouble is, if you don't risk anything, you risk even more.'" I scribbled it down and added it to the wall.

That evening I went to the library and checked out a book on quotes. Smitten, I added a new quote daily. In a few months, I'd covered the entire wall. Co-workers stopped by to read the quotes or suggest new ones.

If I started to free-fall into the abyss of job despair, I gently turned my neck to the right and a quote by a famous person jumped out to lend me a helping inspirational hand:

"A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step." Lao Tzu
 "If you obey all the rules, you miss all the fun." Katharine Hepburn

During a lunchtime walk, I mentioned to a friend that I needed to leave my job. He told me something that ended up on my quote wall right smack in the middle of all the others. "Quitting a job without another job was the most liberating thing I ever did." That's when I realized everyone on the planet has something important to say and that a person didn't have to be dead, famous or in a quote book to speak words powerful enough to help someone else.

His contrarian quote broke the camel of change's back, so to speak. I read his sage words every day for three weeks, finding it enticing and terrifying at the same time. Then I got up my gall and walked into my boss's office. "Eric," I said, "I'm moving on. I'll stay until you find a replacement." Six weeks later, my replacement-in-training looked at me in disbelief when I told her my non-plans. "I'd be too scared to leave a job without another job," she confessed.

And scared I was. I had rent to pay and no money for health insurance. But at least I felt alive for the first time in a long time. I got some consulting gigs through an agency that sent me to different companies, where I inevitably met at least one person who pulled me aside and said, "I give you a lot of credit. I don't have the guts to quit my job." I noticed a pattern. People stayed in their jobs out of fear—fear they'd never find another job, fear, perhaps, as Emile Zola, the gutsy French writer, said to "live out loud." Yet within one year, I'd gotten a much better paying job as a communications writer working for a boss who trusted me enough to let me customize my position. I was soon spending my 40 hours a week playing to my strengths rather than apologizing for my weaknesses. Sometimes it's important to just "Leap," as artist Julia Cameron said, "and the net will appear."

Despite liking my new job, I nevertheless brought along my trusty quotes and pinned them to the wall of my cubicle. I knew there'd be times down the work road when I would need a mental lift, when I would need to be reminded that I always had a choice. During those times I got what I needed by reading the not-always-silent Mary Pickford's words, "You may have a fresh start any moment you choose, for this thing that we call 'failure' is not the falling down, but the staying down." Or the adventurous Mark Twain's, "Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover."

I've long since left that "new" job and now work for myself. No matter how busy I am, I still take time each day to read from my collection of quote books or stop by someone's blog to post an original Giuliaetta quote. I like to think that my words of Internet wisdom might inspire others to realize they always have a choice, whatever the circumstances. Recently, I left these words for a blogger named Vivian who was contemplating making some big, scary life changes:

"Lots of people lead perfect lives. Perfect, that is, for someone else. How can so many of us desire the same life when our hearts ache to tell their own stories? Perhaps we've been conditioned to want collective illusions to help us forget who we really are."

She wrote back, "Thank you for your supportive words. I'm going to find the right life for me."

Giuliaetta "Julie" Nardone enjoys karaoke, kayaking, bicycling and inspiring others to take back their power. You can read her blog "Take Back Your Life" at giuliettaemuse.com/blog.

Holiday Wish List

- * YAG Laser Facials *
- * Laser Skin Rejuvenation & Lifting
- * Laser Hair Removal
- * Bio-Identical Hormone Replacement
- * Chemical Peels *
- * Latisse
- * Luca Sunscreen *
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- * Botox
- * Sclerotherapy *
- * Facials
- * Massage *
- * Permanent Makeup

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