

# Making a New

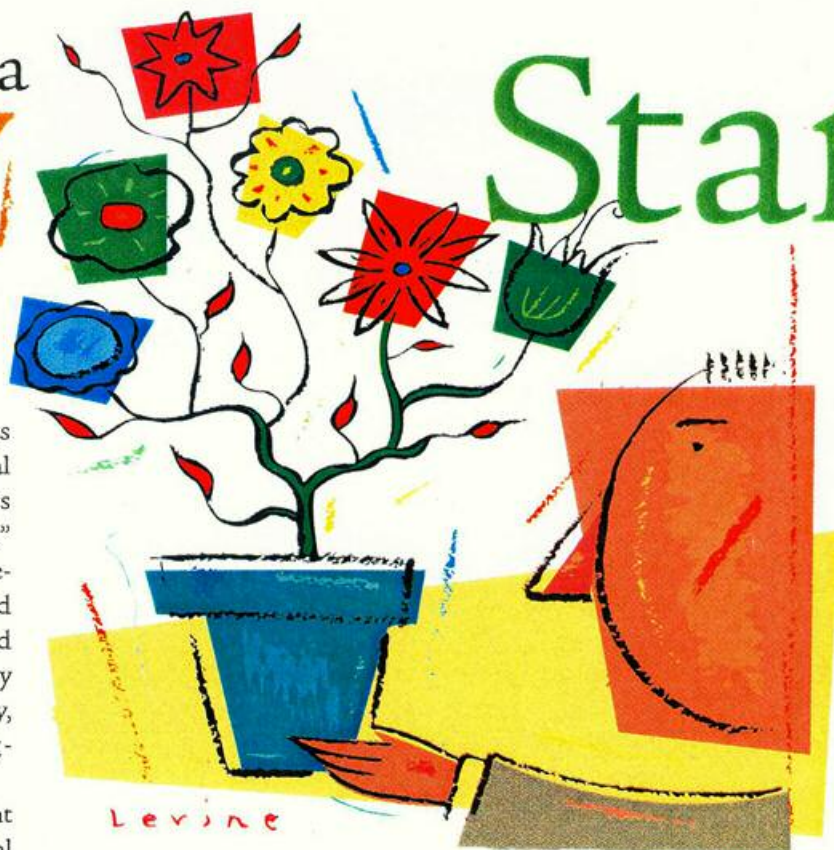
# Start

BY EMILY WOJCIK

**W**hen Jane Whetstone received her lupus diagnosis in 1991, she was at the peak of her career as a marketing director for a large national bank. "I was one of the top wage-earners in the country and had a very active life," she says. Her symptoms became so severe, however, that eventually she had to leave her job. "My lifestyle changed completely, and everything became very difficult," she remembers. Suddenly, Whetstone found herself out on long-term disability, and at loose ends.

And Whetstone isn't alone: A recent study on work and lupus from the National Institutes of Health estimated that nearly half of the study participants who were employed when diagnosed in their mid-30s would not be working by age 50 due to fatigue and other symptoms of lupus.

Today, Whetstone is a writer ([www.janesplace.org](http://www.janesplace.org)) and is working toward her dream of becoming a motivational speaker for others who find themselves



in similar circumstances. "Finding a new way to earn an income can be stressful beyond measure," she says. She suggests making a list of your strengths and using this time to pursue avenues that play to those skills.

If you are facing time off work due to lupus, this can be a good opportunity to take classes that train you for jobs that allow you to work part-time or from home. Most community colleges offer continuing education for adults looking to develop skills as diverse as computer programming and foreign language translation. Online courses also are available in many fields.

If going back to school isn't a good fit, consider using this time to volunteer. It's a good way to develop skills and gain on-the-job experience at no cost—and on a schedule that works for you. Plus, it will help fill those pesky white spaces on your résumé when you are ready to return to the workforce.

Hoping to return to your former career? The Job Accommodation Network offers information on working with employers to accommodate your needs, including sample "situations and solutions" for employees with lupus. The Resource Partnership is a nonprofit site for resources on how to return to work, find career centers, and contact the America's Workforce Network.

Above all, try to find comfort in knowing that leaving your job isn't the end of your world. These days, Whetstone sees her lifestyle change as an opportunity to pursue her spiritual and creative needs. "In sharing my own triumph over tragedy," she says, "I've found I can be a driving force in helping others to stay proactive in their health and spiritual journeys."

In learning to succeed at your own new goals, or helping others do the same, you may discover strengths you never knew you had. And isn't that what making a new start is really all about? ■

## RESOURCES:

- **Resource Partnership:**  
[www.resourcepartnership.org](http://www.resourcepartnership.org)
- **Job Accommodation Network:**  
[www.jan.wvu.edu/media/Lupus.html](http://www.jan.wvu.edu/media/Lupus.html)
- **America's Service Career Centers:**  
[www.servicelocator.org](http://www.servicelocator.org)
- **America's Workforce Network Toll-Free Help Line:**  
1-877-US-2JOBS (1-877-872-5627)
- **VolunteerMatch:**  
[www.volunteermatch.org](http://www.volunteermatch.org)