



Life has a way of placing us in shifts we never thought we'd face—and never felt ready for. Yet those very moments became the ones that grew me, stretched me, and reminded me that God uses every season to shape who we are becoming. These are four of the shifts that forever changed my life.

From Full House to Quiet Spaces (*Empty Nest*)

I thought I had prepared myself well for the empty nest season. With my kids being four years apart, I sent them to out-of-state summer camps to give them a taste of dorm life—roommates, shared spaces, and the rhythm of being away from home. When my oldest left for college, the transition was softened by the fact that my youngest was still home. Yes, there were tears, but with college only an hour and a half away, weekly visits made it manageable. In full transparency, that drive was filled with my ugly crying while Regina Belle's "*If I Could*" played on repeat. But even through the tears, it felt a little like a false alarm—I still had one at home.

The real shift came when my youngest packed up, not just to leave the house, but to leave the state—and the time zone. That one hit different. Especially because, after my daughter's graduation, both kids had been back home for a year. Just as I'd gotten used to having them under my roof again, they both left the time zone together.

The irony? I was excited to embrace the quiet and new beginnings with my husband—while he grieved the silence. Talk about a plot twist! Eventually, we found our rhythm. We traveled more with friends, and we made a point of visiting the kids, discovering their new cities through their eyes. It was a joy to watch them explore, grow, and share their adventures with us.

Sometimes I still catch myself standing in their doorways, lingering a little too long in rooms that look frozen in time, waiting for them to return. But those moments only make the hugs sweeter when we do reconnect. Now, the empty nest feels less like a loss and more like a gift. I love the freedom to fall into spontaneous dinners, movie nights, and weekend getaways with my husband. And I love seeing the fruits of our labor in the young adults we now get to cheer on as they navigate their own lives.

This empty nest season? It's not an ending—it's an invitation. Step into it expecting new adventures, deeper connections, and a fresh chapter waiting to be written.

When the Roles Reverse (*Caregiving for Aging Loved Ones*)

I was an only child, born to an only child, watching my Mother care for her own Mother. Momma retired early to be present for my grandmother's (Nanie's) needs, but what she didn't expect was how heavy the weight of caregiving would be. At the same time, I was a young wife and mother of two kids under 10, working full time and juggling all the daily demands of family and career. That's when life threw me a shift I never saw coming.

One afternoon, Momma was having signs of a heart attack and drove herself to the hospital. She had 99% blockage in her main artery and was rushed into surgery to save her heart. I was devastated. The stress of her caregiving had nearly cost her life. And that's when I knew what I had to do. Since Nanie could no longer live alone and Momma was stretched beyond her capacity, I began the process of finding an Assisted Living community near me so I could step in.

It wasn't easy. Nanie hated the thought of it, and truthfully, I wasn't thrilled either. But I knew what Momma was feeling as an only child; that reality hits hard when *it's all on you*. So I put on my big girl pants, had the hard conversations, called my contacts in the industry, and made it happen. The transition was tough, and Nanie let her displeasure be known. But before long, she settled in, became everyone's best friend, and was even voted Resident Council President.

That joy was short-lived. After just 18 months, my grandmother was diagnosed with stage 4 lung cancer. Within five months, she was hospitalized, placed on hospice, and passed away the week before Mother's Day. Her funeral happened on my birthday, and it was me, who stood to speak for our small family.

That season of caregiving was an unexpected shift that taught me more than I imagined. I learned about Nanie's strength, I gave my children the gift of more time with her, and I discovered my own resilience. She and I shared the same iron will, which sometimes made things harder, but it also carried us through. Now, when unexpected calls come about caring for my own Momma, I'm better prepared—no matter how big or small the shift.

Caregiving takes so much out of you. It forces you to pause your own life and rearrange the pieces so everything fits. But it also teaches you about love, sacrifice, and strength in ways nothing else can.

The Unspoken Transition (*Menopause*)

Whew! Where do I even begin? In full transparency, I had no idea what was happening to me. Nobody ever told me about menopause.

I remember once, while caring for my grandmother, we were riding to a doctor's appointment when the subject of my uterus came up. I think we were talking about hysterectomies. She looked at me and, with a straight face, said, "*You still have your uterus? You've got the oldest uterus in the family!*" I didn't know whether to laugh or be offended, but looking back, that was probably the closest thing to a "menopause talk" I ever got. And truthfully, I never thought to ask more.

So a few years later, when the brain fog, hot flashes, and night sweats showed up uninvited, I was completely unprepared. I couldn't remember anything, I'd burst into flames from the inside out, and I often had to get up in the

middle of the night to shower because I was drenched in sweat like I'd just run a marathon in my sleep. I. Was. Miserable.

I started asking my mom questions, but she had a hysterectomy when I was in grade school. Her symptoms were different, and her answers didn't really help. I didn't know how to bring it up with friends at first... until I did. And once I started asking, I couldn't stop. I researched, asked again, and finally found a doctor who assured me I wasn't crazy—estrogen was just packing her bags and preparing to leave.

Once I understood the *why*, I started finding ways to manage the symptoms. The hot flashes dimmed, the night sweats faded, and I began to step into the strongest version of myself I've ever known. Estrogen, in her heyday, had been a filter—keeping lids on parts of me that needed to open, muting a voice that needed to be heard. When she left, I finally felt free.

Now? I can wear white pants whenever I want. I say *no* without apology. And I'm falling in love with the woman who was waiting to be revealed all along.

So cheers to this shifted season. When life shifts, you've got to exercise *unfiltered*. Think about it.

Career Crossroads (*Career*)

When I first stumbled into the senior healthcare industry, I never imagined it would become my career. But I quickly fell in love with helping families navigate care for their loved ones—whether that meant senior living, home health, hospice, or even hip protection. What drew me in most were the difficult situations, because I knew I could find a solution. The more I learned, the more I wanted to know.

For me, career was never just about chasing passion. It was about balance—the kind that allowed me to care for my family while doing work I enjoyed. Let's be real: I didn't want to work just to say I had a job. I worked to provide for the needs and desires of my family. Over time, though, I realized work could benefit me as much as I benefited my employer. That shift in mindset changed everything.

I knew what I was good at, and thankfully, others noticed too. I wanted flexibility—to be present for school activities, travel with my family, and take time off without guilt. And for a season, I had it all. Remote work with unlimited PTO gave me the freedom to show up at every high school game, plan summer trips, and make college visits with ease. It was a dream gig... until it ended.

By then, I had built a lifestyle around balance and freedom. With both kids out of the nest—and in another time zone—I wasn't willing to compromise what I had gained. I loved traveling with my husband, and I wasn't about to give that up. So, I had to pivot. That meant learning new skills, presenting my expertise differently, and proving my value to employers I found attractive.

I began to define my non-negotiables and had the courage to voice them. My skillset gave me the leverage to ask for what I wanted. Sometimes I heard hard “no's,” but those paved the way to some pretty incredible “yes's.”

It's easy to settle into a career slump, staying too long when you know it's time to move on. But betting on yourself? That's where the real shift happens. Because one thing I know for sure—not trying is a guaranteed no every single time.

Thank You

Thank you for taking the time to read *The Shifts That Changed My Life*. Writing these stories reminded me that every season—whether joyful, painful, or unexpected—shapes us in ways we don't always see at the time. My hope is that as you read, you recognized pieces of your own journey and felt a little less alone in your shifts.

Life doesn't always prepare us for change, but together we can find strength, faith, and even joy in the process. I'm so grateful you chose to spend this time with me.

With love,



Sherrain, The Shift Whisperer™

Life will always bring shifts—some that break our hearts, others that stretch us, and still others that surprise us with joy. The truth is, you don't have to walk through any of them alone.

That's why I created **The Shifted Life** community. It's a space where we talk honestly about the hard shifts and celebrate the winning ones, together. If you're ready for encouragement, sisterhood, and real conversations about life's seasons, I'd love to see you inside.

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