

# spectrum

Real Life

## She took the step

Grace Cirocco encourages people to overcome personal roadblocks to pursue their dreams

By CHERYL CLOCK  
Standard Staff

Grace Cirocco was about to give up on her dream.

A couple years before, she'd quit her full-time job as a CBC radio show producer in Calgary to start her own company.

The first years were a struggle. Business was slow and fears of failure and self-doubt came fast.

She was on the brink of throwing in the entrepreneurial towel when she had a dream one night — a dream that gave her the faith to keep going.

In the vision, she was labouring to scale a vertical wall of slick black marble with her bare hands. After many failed attempts — accompanied each time with negative self-talk — she closed her eyes, took a deep breath and repeated to herself, "I can do it."

Out of nowhere, eight words appeared at the top of the wall — Take the step, the bridge will be there.

When she opened her eyes, she had reached the summit. It was a turning point in her life; with a new-found belief in herself, she persisted towards her dream.

A few years later, the 41-year-old mother of two who grew up in St. Catharines, has turned those inspirational few words and life lessons into her first book.

Take the Step: The Bridge Will Be There (HarperCollins Canada Ltd., \$30), is based on her work as a motivational speaker and training consultant. She will appear for a book signing at Chapters in St. Catharines Nov. 11 at 2 p.m.

She encourages people to pursue their own dreams in life, by helping them to find and overcome personal roadblocks.

"So many of us, either we lack faith or we lack the ability to take the step," she says from her home in Mississauga.

"Some people are paralysed to take action," she adds. "Some people take action but don't believe their bridge will be there."

"They expect failure and they fail."

Cirocco's earliest lessons came from her parents, Matteo and Concetta Cirocco, who live on a farm along Read Road, dividing St. Catharines from Niagara-on-the-Lake.

They immigrated to Canada from Italy with high hopes and little money when Cirocco was three years old. Living in Toronto, they visited Niagara one day to buy fruit for canning and ended up buying a farm on Read Road.

They lived in a "decrepit little house" with no running water, acquired more property, then built their own home and moved down the road.

In the summers, Cirocco worked on the farm and at a nearby fruit market and garden centre.

Consumed with wanderlust, she often drove her father's tractor to the back of the farm along the Welland Canal and wrote in her journal. As the ships passed, she'd wave to the sailors, dreaming of the day she too would travel to distant lands.

After graduating from Niagara District Secondary School and Governor Simcoe, she took off to France to study French, one of many worldly destinations on her personal roadmap.

At university, in Kingston and London, her passion for philosophy grew. Then one day, fresh out of school, she donned her best outfit and headed to the CBC TV news offices in Toronto. She strutted past security guards, up an elevator, past a receptionist and into the office of the executive producer.

So impressed, he recommended her to a colleague at CBC radio who offered her a job as a reporter.

She stayed with the CBC for five years, but couldn't ignore a nagging thought: "I don't want to cover the newsmakers, I want to be a newsmaker."

Once again tempted by adventure, she convinced her husband, Welland native

Santo D'Agostino, to quit their jobs, sell their worldly belongings and backpack around the world for a year.

On their return, after a stint with the federal government, she embarked on another adventure — her own business.

And thanks to the well-timed dream, she persevered through the bad times and has incorporated her life experiences into inspirational seminars she delivers to national conferences, governments and corporations.

In her book, she guides readers through their own personal journey of self-discov-

ery. She tells people they must find who they really are and be true to themselves.

"There's so many of us that walk around leading mediocre lives because we're numb," she says.

"We're unable, unwilling to follow our truth."

Next, they must figure out their destiny. "People won't take the step across the bridge if they don't have a clear vision of what is waiting for them on the other side," she says.

The alternative, is spiritual death, she says.

"If you're doing something your soul does not want to do," she says, "slowly, you turn off your passion for life."



**WHAT:** Book signing by Grace Cirocco, author of *Take the Step: The Bridge Will Be There, Inspiration and Guidance for Moving Your Life Forward* (HarperCollins Canada Ltd., \$30).

**WHERE:** Chapters, St. Catharines.

**WHEN:** Sunday, Nov. 11.

**TIME:** 2 p.m.



staff photo by Leonard LePage



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GRACE CIROCCO