

So You've Decided to Go Back to Work – Now What?

Part two of May's column "To work or Not to Work – A Mom's Dilemma"

So you're going back to work! Perhaps it has become clear that you need to work for financial reasons, or maybe you want to work to regain balance in your life or pursue a personal goal or interest. Regardless of the reason, heading back to work after having a child poses some unique emotions that may include excitement, guilt, confidence, self doubt, clarity, confusion, freedom, time constraints, etc. As you can see, the emotions of returning to work with child(ren) at home can be quite intense and span the spectrum. You may even find that you flip flop from one to the other from moment to moment. Just know that this is normal – for what that's worth. Take a deep breath and read on.

Before jumping into the familiar or what seems like the easiest solution, take an inventory of what you really want and/or need. Now is a great time to rediscover yourself.

1. Jot down any and all careers/occupations/jobs that you have ever thought of as being even remotely interesting. After each one, answer the question, "What is it about the image of that career/occupation/job that is of interest to me?" Identify the themes that emerge.
2. Think back to your childhood. What types of things did you like to do? Jot down whatever comes into your memory. If you want to take this a step farther, ask your parents, siblings, childhood friends, etc. "What do you remember me doing and liking as a kid? What was I naturally drawn to?"
3. Look back on previous jobs or roles that you have played throughout your life. What did you like about each one and what did you dislike about each one? Create two columns on a piece of paper with the left hand column labeled "liked" and the right hand column labeled "disliked". For each job or role you can think of, list out the things you liked and disliked about them. Note the themes that emerge and use this analysis to define your true strengths – meaning those things that you are good at AND like to do.
4. Have you taken any personality assessments such as Myers Briggs or DiSC? If you have those, review them and see what they have to say about you. If you would like to take such an assessment, call me or find mini-versions on-line.

If you are having trouble with any of these activities, take a deep breath and tell yourself it's okay to explore in this way and have fun with it. Once you've shaken off any resistance to these exercises, try again with a lighter approach.

Visualization is another GREAT way to envision your future and allow limitations to slip away. Visualize (and feel) it all, from the type of work you are doing, to the environment you are working in, how many hours per week, the type of people you are working with, where your children are while you are at work, etc. Simply allow images and feelings to come in no matter how unrealistic they may seem in the moment. I wrote about this

technique in the January issue of the Highlander. All past articles as well as other recommended resources are located on my website, www.motherhoodtransitions.com.

As themes emerge, have fun playing with different combinations. For instance if you love adventure and financial planning, it may seem that the two have nothing to do with each other at face value. But what about a career as a vacation planner, or a business analyst for an adventure company, a financial analyst for a travel magazine, a financial consultant conducting workshops on a retirement cruise ship, or a timeshare sales professional. Playing with combinations can be a whole lot of fun and freeing too. Get silly with it if you'd like and see what you can come up with.

After playing with career ideas, it's now time to do some market research and informational interviewing. Researching the field is an important step in your career transition following self discovery. One technique for researching, and perhaps the most effective and rewarding, is through informational interviewing. Informational interviewing provides you with the opportunity to connect personally with people who are already in the field you are considering. Through these conversations you gain real life insight into the careers that are available, what opportunities actually exist, and begin to sense whether there is a true fit for you or not. Did you know that the majority of jobs are found through personal connections not through the traditional means of job hunting? Feel free to contact me for a list of effective interview questions and other market research resources free of charge or obligation.

Once you're relatively certain about the field of work you'd like to pursue, it is then time to put your resume together. Below are guidelines to help you write a resume that will grab the attention of your reader. There are essentially two aspects of a well-written resume, the content and the format. Special attention is required with regard to both in order to capture and keep the attention of your reader. Guidelines and sample resumes can be found on my website, www.integratedgrowth.com.

Following the creation or updating of your resume, it's time to apply for jobs and prepare for interviews and negotiations. Oh and did I mention, figuring out what you're going to do with the kids?

Most of all, throughout your career transition process, pay close attention to your physical sensations and emotions and ask your body what it is trying to tell you. Your body is a powerful guide if you allow it to be! For more information on Mind-Body awareness techniques, refer to the February article, Heel-ing the Mind Heals the Soul. Through this practice you may become aware of limiting beliefs or attachments to things that no longer serve you in this new phase of your life.

Lastly, I encourage you to repeat this affirmation daily as you are doing dishes, walking, or simply being: "I move forward fearlessly, trusting that each step I take is perfectly guided."

I wish you the best in your new endeavor.

Next month...

If you have chosen not to work during this phase of motherhood, be sure to pick up next month's Highlander as this column will be dedicated to you.