



A new start, but what?

"Love not what you are but what you may become" [Miguel de Cervantes, Spanish novelist.]

"Well I want to go back to work now the kids are at school, but it's been such a long time since I had a job, I just wouldn't know where to start".

"Well I used to work in marketing, but so much has changed since I had my children, I would be so behind – my skills are all so outdated".

Sound familiar?

A career coach said to me a few months ago, "it's not a job for life, it's a life of jobs". To me, that's exciting. The thought that I'll do lots of different things, not just one.

So, firstly we need to change our perception of what it is to 'start over'. When Steve Jobs, the founder of Apple was fired from Apple when he was 30 (I know, how does that work?!) he describes it thus "the heaviness of being successful was replaced with the lightness of being a beginner again"...." It freed me to enter one of the most creative periods of my life" and started Pixar Animations. And we are all immensely grateful as who doesn't love Toy Story?!

I can completely sympathise with this, except that I had been asking myself the question "what do I *really* want to do" well before I had children, but it took me until I had become a mother to actually do something about it.

Think about what you love. Think about what interests you. Don't think of a career first then try to fit your skills and interests around it. Start by looking inside, and at what makes you a unique individual.

I know, 'what does it mean to "look inside"?' Well, I mean look at what is important to you, what you stand for.

Think of a time in your life when you have made a stand. It could be in the playground at school when you were 8, or at work when you stood up to your boss or a client. Think of what was going on. What were you standing up for? Justice? Respect? Loyalty? These are things that are important to you.

I made a stand for my own happiness and wellbeing when I decided to resign from my job as a solicitor and retrain to be a coach and facilitator. I know from this that being 'myself' – an authentic individual, doing what is right for me and being happy – is very important to me.

Think also of times when you were really happy. What was going on? Was it a professional achievement, or a family moment? Again, you can discover a lot about yourself from remembering these happy moments, especially if you can really identify exactly what it was that made it so special. You may, for example, have felt a sense of achievement. But, what was behind that? Was it actually personal fulfilment, or achievement for someone else? A parent? Or to prove someone else wrong? Keep asking 'what feeling did it give me?' to get to the real crux of what is important to you.

When you have a list of these things – you have discovered your values.

When you have discovered your values – the things that are really important to you - decision-making becomes easy. If you always make a decision based on your values and what you stand for, the decision will always be the right one for you.

Knowing your values is like having a compass and a destination. The specifics of exactly what you are going to do is the roadmap.

So, what has this got to do with making a new start? Well, it is the starting point to deciding what precisely you're going to do now! And that is to pursue a career doing something that is in line with your values. It could be working for a company that shares your values, or in a profession that is all about your values, for example, nursing or any type of caring profession if one of your values is caring for or nurturing others. Or it could be setting up a business making something or providing a service that perfectly fits your values and skills set.



Now think about what you enjoy and what matches your natural abilities as well as the skills you undoubtedly still have, albeit that you may not have been consciously employing for some years.

Many of us find this very difficult at first, so think about asking someone you know well to help you as they will probably be a lot more generous than you will be on yourself at first! When I say 'what you're good at' and 'what you enjoy doing' I don't just mean IT skills, book-keeping, marketing etc, I mean empathy, organisation, prioritising, keeping calm under pressure, working in a team.

And this brings me on to the copious skills that you are amazing at already simply by being a mum. And believe me, these are multiple and very transferable! For example, organisational skills, diplomacy, prioritising, deep empathy, caring, nurturing other people, negotiating, motivating (think of those days when they just don't want to go to school, or you have to make them think that a trip to the supermarket will be the best fun they've ever had!), teamwork (think of those play dates and days out, or school events you've organised with other mums), and resilience. All these things are relevant and are examples of you using natural skills that are extremely important in the work place.

So, to make sure you get really excited about your new start, and to help with confidence, make sure you aim for something that you really believe in and is right for you, and something that you will enjoy and that you will be good at. Aim high and don't sell yourself short.

And lastly, listen out for that negative voice in your head that tries to sabotage all good, positive feelings by telling you "you can't do it", or that "you're no good". We all have one! Remember, what it says is not true and not helpful. You must listen more attentively to that other voice that is so often drowned out, that "you are great", and "you CAN do it".

The author, Susie Kendall, is the founder of 'You Blossom', helping and supporting mums through coaching to create a better balance in their lives and to realise their own possibilities.

