

Breathe Again
magazine

Just when the caterpillar thought its life was over, it became a butterfly
Anonymous



It became a butterfly

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BUSINESS ADVICE, TIPS & PRACTICES



**EACH MONTH BREATHE AGAIN MAGAZINE WILL BRING YOU ADVICE
FROM INDUSTRY EXPERTS**

TAKE YOUR BUSINESS TO THE NEXT LEVEL



Are You Afraid?

by Sylvia J. Christian, Ph.D., N.C.C., C.C.

ARE YOU AFRAID?

Are you a Baby Boomer or empty nester? Are you having trouble reentering the job market or returning to school? Are you afraid you don't know what would be the best career for you or even if you will be hired because you are older than most? Are you fearful that you won't be able to compete if you go back to school and won't be successful since you have been out of school for quite some time?

All of these are natural fears that I especially understand. I went back to school at age forty after being out of school for twenty years. I was no different than anyone else, worried about being successful and afraid that once I was out of school and ready to work, I might be too old to be hired. I am going to give you a name to identify that person who reenters the job market or school at an older age. It is "non-traditional" worker or student and that is not a bad thing to be. What society is finding out is that today's non traditional student or worker brings a lot to the table. Usually they have a work ethic that far exceeds their younger counterpart. They have the drive to reach their goals and present themselves well. They usually have a much better attendance record than the younger generation and are not afraid to take on things in their jobs that many younger workers feel are below them. Non-Traditional Worker or Student isn't a bad label because many instructors and employers appreciate what you represent. Instructors realize you are in school because you want to be there and you will do what it takes to be successful. Therefore, don't be afraid; be excited about what's ahead of you.

Here are some tips to help you re-emerge into these two different areas:

- Prepare for a career by researching who you are and what talents and skills you have

This is where a career coach will assist you in finding a career that will bring passion, purpose and fulfillment into your life. Your coach will help you figure out what you really want to do or what that underlying unfulfilled dream of yours is. Also, a coach will support you through the process of setting goals, getting over hurdles and keeping you on track to reach those goals.

- Be ready to do the research and ask the necessary questions

Talk to your friends, spouse and other family members about what type of training, course work/certification might be necessary for the career you have chosen. I always suggest people go on line and check out the occupational handbook to not only determine what the occupation pays in your area, but if there's a market for it where you live. Make a list of questions about training, salary, advancement and even average work hours. Then take it to someone in the field and ask those questions before you go any further with your plan.

- Get the Education and Training you need

When you find that you can do the work necessary in the way of additional education or training, you will realize you have the ability to see yourself getting through the program. If this is what you need in order to do the job you want, don't shy away from it because of fear of failure. You can do it...

- Customize your Resume

When there has been a big gap in employment or the most recent employment was less than desirable, it is best to use a functional resume. You can highlight your skills and abilities and downplay the time gap or less than desirable previous employment. Don't forget to mention volunteer work in the past. Just because you weren't paid doesn't mean that it didn't have value.

- Get into the Networking Game

Now, don't be afraid because this is nothing more than letting everyone know you are looking for a job and letting others know about your skills. If you had a good relationship with your former

employer, and he or she is in the area, contact them. It is often easier to hire a former employee, then starting from scratch and not knowing anything about that employee.

- Finally, give the process time

Most people do not land the job of their dreams overnight. It may take 3, 6 or even 9 months to find that job. Remember, finding a job is a job so set aside time each day to network, check ads and job fair ads on the Internet, write cover letters, and customize your resume for each job. Just as in any job, the effort you put in to this will show up in the results.

For those who have discovered that they need to go back to school for either a certification or degree, do not be afraid. I know you are wondering if you will be able to do the work. I speak to you not only as a previous “non-traditional student” but also as a college counselor. I can tell you that as you are successful each semester, your confidence will grow. You will know that you have all you need to be successful. What better training could you have to fulfill this goal than as a wife or mother? You know what it takes to stick with something and succeed.

I would like to give you a few tips now that might make the process easier:

- Start with one toe in the water at a time

Start with taking only one or two courses. Starting slow gets you back into the school frame of mind. Today there are many options available to student regarding when, where and how they take a course. If you work, an evening course may work best for you. If you still have many responsibilities that keep you at home and make it hard to get away, consider an online course. It is good to decide beforehand whether you need to seek a degree. What type of degree or certification are you seeking? A career coach can often assist you with all of these questions. As far as a time frame goes for completing all your studies, remember you can adjust that as you go along and see what other things may slow down or speed up the process.

- Scheduling your time

When I returned to school, I was working and had a daughter in high school, and one in middle school. Going to school two to four nights a week was a heavy load. I had to adjust it to fit the time we had in that location since I knew that as a military wife, I would be moving after three years. This isn't always the best thing for everyone, so carefully consider all aspects of your life such as family, job and any other responsibilities when determining your course load.

- Financial aid

How many times have you heard someone say they couldn't go back to school because they didn't have the money? Depending upon your financial situation, you may qualify for many different programs now available. You can search not only online for available aid and scholarships at www.collegeboard.com and www.fastweb.com and also visit the financial aid office at the institution you would like to attend. Money doesn't need to be an obstacle in your education.

- Realize that as an older student who has been away from school, you are going to have to concentrate on four key areas

You will have to set aside **time to study**. The young college student has only one job and that is school. You may be trying to balance a job and family at the same time. It is important that you pick a time that makes the most sense to your body clock to study. It can be (early morning, noon or evening) and mark the time on your calendar. If something comes up during this time, learn to say no politely and stick to your schedule.

- Manage Test Anxiety

No matter how hard you study, certain tests are going to be stressful. The obvious answer is to be prepared. However I will testify to the fact that as a math phobic, no matter how much I studied I was anxious at times. So don't cram the night before because your brain will function better if:

- You arrive 10 minutes early and relax, do not talk to others nor try to study
- Take a few deep calming breaths before you start
- Do some positive self talk. “I can do this; I have prepared and am ready”

- Read the instruction carefully
- Go with your first instincts on your question, you will usually be right
- Answer the questions you know first and then go back to the others

Take your time; the person leaving first doesn't necessarily get the best score.

- Get Enough Sleep

In learning anything, it is important to get enough sleep. Studies have shown that people who sleep between learning and testing have scores much higher than those who haven't slept. An all-nighter is never a good ideal.

- Get a Support System

Your family can be your support system, as many women will attest to. Many schools will have websites or organizations on campus to help the adult learner. You can also research on line under "non-tradition students" for help in finding additional support systems. Stop by at the Counseling Office of your school and ask if they have an organization for the adult learner. Above all, connect with other adult students in your classes so you can support each other.

In closing I want to encourage you to let go of the fear and reach for the stars. Whether returning to school or work, the possibilities are limitless and are there for the taking. If you are having trouble starting, hook up with a Life coach and get started. I can speak from experience; you will accomplish things you never thought possible. So don't wait, get going, and good luck!

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