

Research, prepare, and be creative.
Tell yourself it can be done!

Back in the Game— Returning to Work after a Long Absence



IMAGINE YOURSELF WITH THREE PRE-TEEN KIDS, no high school diploma, a homemaker who chose to share one paycheck so you could stay home with the kids. Now after 12 years as a stay at home mom, you suddenly have no means of support. Maybe you were never very good in school and the thought of returning terrifies you, but who will hire you without at least a high school diploma or GED?

Or maybe you are the woman who suddenly finds herself with six children and a disabled husband. The Social Security application process takes a while, and even then, it won't support the family.

Then again, perhaps you are more like that devoted wife and mother whose children are finally out of the home and you want to return to work....a paycheck might be a nice change. But, it has been 26 years since you were part of the professional world; half a lifetime ago when you were young and working to help get your husband through college. Sure, you've worked hard every day since then too, but you are not quite sure how to include changing diapers, chauffeuring kids and all those volunteer activities for the PTA in an effective resume. Heck, you know you have skills, but it is so dang hard to figure out how to put them down on paper! Besides, you ask yourself, just what is it I would enjoy doing as much as I've enjoyed raising a family?



While each of these women has different reasons and motivations for returning to the workforce, many of their fears and challenges are the same.

Am I bright enough?

Can I do it?

How do I get there?

The answer many have found is YES! Despite what may seem to be insurmountable odds, you can do it!

Tips for Getting Back in the Workforce

Seek information and assistance. The Department of Workforce Services (DWS) is a good place to start. You may qualify for training assistance through the Utah Displaced Homemaker program, PELL grants, or one of the other federal, state or local retraining programs. Just go to our web site (jobs.utah.gov) and click on “Training Services” in the Job Seekers area for a wealth of information and links to training resources. Under the “Services for Individuals and Families” you can also link to the Electronic Job Board, Job Seeker Guides and even information about services to help make ends meet along your way. Our site also has an abundance of career planning information and links to exploring what might best suit your needs in the Career Center.

Identify a goal that will match with timeframes, personality and needed income. Is the time involved in obtaining a four-year degree unmanageable? Use the career information on the DWS web site to find careers with shorter training time, but good wages. On the www.utahfutures.org web site, you can find out how to achieve your goal—the education

you’ll need, how to pay for it, and where it is offered.

Shadow or at least talk to people in various occupations

to find out what they like and don’t like—compare what they have to say with what you know about yourself. Use self-assessment tools (www.utahfutures.org includes some assessment tools) to learn more about what occupations might suit you.

Prepare for your work search.

Finding a job is hard work and may be discouraging. Many women say finding a job after an extended absence from the workforce was more stressful than their divorces. However, you can achieve your goals, if you are properly prepared.

Prepare for the applications.

Make sure you have all the information you need to fill out a standard job application—including references. Revising your resume to highlight skills each employer is seeking often works better than using one generic resume.

Figure out how to answer those tough questions.

Make use of all those skills developed as a homemaker. The book, *If You’ve Raised Kids, You Can Manage Anything* by Ann Crittendon, can help you clarify your skills.

Find out how to dress, what to say, how to interview.

The library has a wide assortment of books to help advise you or find out when your local employment center offers their Job Search workshop.

Go to practice interviews. Interview on jobs you may not want, or may feel under-qualified for to prepare for the ones you really do want. You’ll get better at the interview process and may get offered a job anyway!

Depending on your situation, don’t be afraid to turn down a job you really don’t want. You’ll be spending a lot of time at work. It should be an enjoyable experience.

Surround yourself with a few good friends or family members. Look for individuals who are positive, yet realistic. Seek out and stay connected to those people who are encouraging while also being honest. Hold on to those people in your life who inspire you to push harder when the going gets rough. Nurture the relationships with friends who listen, question, and help you decide what is best for you; not the ones who are quick to agree, who tell you what you want to hear to make you feel better, or worse yet, those who want to tell you what you should do.

And finally, take a proactive approach. After all, you’ve already had at least one or two successful careers, including homemaker. That may mean you have fewer than the predicted six-to-eight lifetime careers ahead of you, so you want to increase the likelihood of finding something you truly enjoy...and a knowledgeable approach is the best way to accomplish that goal. Otherwise you may find yourself, like many, ten years later in a job that picked you, instead of one you chose. And while that is not always a bad thing, if you are going to spend six to eight hours or more a day working for someone else, wouldn’t you rather be doing something you find enjoyable, meaningful and fulfilling?

The Good News? You’ve been given a chance to re-invent yourself. Take advantage of this unexpected opportunity to make a great career choice and find additional fulfillment in life! ☺