



She Wants to Change Her Life

Dear Aunt Bossy,

The New Year is approaching and I want to change my life. I am in my late thirties, and my two kids are in their late teens, so I have some freedom. I need a job.

Here is the situation. I have no work experience, and have no idea of what I want to do when I grow up. I feel sort of doomed and do not know how I can get out of this spot. We scrape by with assistance and my kids' jobs at McDonalds, but I need to do better. What shall I do?

Darlene

Dear Darlene,

What do you mean, you have no “work experience?” You raised two kids, and we all know that is not easy. You have lots of experience, you just have to figure out a way to apply it and explain it.

First, you have to assess yourself: what do you enjoy doing in your life, not limited to things that are considered “work”? Those are probably the things you are good at doing. What don’t you enjoy? Those are the things you probably aren’t good at and should be as limited as possible, although it is often not possible to eliminate them completely. For example, I have to live with the paperwork attached to my work. I hate it and I am lousy at it.

Tell every single person you talk to that you are looking for a job. When they ask you what you are looking for, say “Something where I ----” Fill in the blank with what you enjoy. For example, “Something where I can interact with people.” Or “Something where I can use my love of organization and paperwork.” If they ask what your experience is, you can honestly tell them you have successfully worked for the toughest bosses a person can have, your children, and you managed all the logistics, all the social interactions with schools, other parents, neighbors, and all the records and paperwork involved with life, while serving up meals and keeping up a clean house.

Speaking of clean houses, if you enjoy cleaning, that is a great way to make a living. Depending upon your clients, you can clean two or three places a day, and charge 20 to 25 dollars an hour, or a set rate. You might want to start out with a professional cleaning firm to learn all the techniques, including time management.

When you go out on your own, chose your clients when possible. I have a friend who built a cleaning business in one building full of one-bedroom apartments or condos where the owners worked. She could be in and out in an hour, leave the place spotless, and pick up \$100 each time. You have to treat it like a business and assess your market, target your clients, and develop a system for the work.

If you prefer to be more sedentary, look into receptionist positions, or customer service posts. If you prefer not to interact with people, look into a factory line where you can listen to what you want to through your headphones while you work. I had a couple of friends who did that and, although I could not imagine it, they loved it.

If you don’t like a job, see if there is something flexible about it that would make it better. For example, if you are a cashier, start greeting the customers with friendliness and energy and you will find it more fun. By the way, I have hired people who impressed me with their energy and

skill when they were cashiers in stores where I shopped. Smart people hire for attitude and train for skill.

Don't get anxious about not knowing what you want to do when you grow up. Most of us don't know, and I only know because I am pretty old and have a job that I love that is perfect for me. It took a long time to land here.

I started out washing syringes and filing x-rays in a doctor's office. I could not get out fast enough, so I became a clerk in a department store. I got to know the women running the fashion shows, and helped them out, which was a lot of fun. I taught high school for two years and fourth grade for two weeks. (Ten year olds were too much of a handful for me). I worked as a trainer at Macy's and had the worst job ever in the intake department in the Missouri Welfare office.

Although there were things I liked about many of these jobs, mainly dealing with people, I wasn't nuts about any of them. I started my path toward a job I love by telling a person at a party that I had no idea where to begin to find a job I liked. He recommended me to a large group travel company who needed people oriented tour escorts to take groups all over the world. Off I went, scared out of my mind.

After some incredible jobs in the travel industry, I got laid off. I could not find a job I wanted. After six months of looking, I answered a blind ad in the NY Times and, after a harrowing hiring and training experience, I landed in the place where I learned everything I needed to know to do what I do now, which is train people in communication and presentation skills.

So, it turns out that my job today shares a lot with the jobs that I did like, working with people, teaching, and travelling. I had no idea such a thing existed.

My point is, do not be discouraged. Take any job if you need one, and keep moving, looking for something with more of what you are good at and enjoy. Step by step is the way to rise.

Be certain to meet as many people at as many levels in any job you have. Show them your

intelligence and charm in your interactions with them, and let them help you move along.

Good luck, and let me know where you land.

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