

Family Law: Time to Make the Donuts: Returning to the Workforce Following Divorce

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When I was growing up my father told me that I need to love my job. My problem was that I really only wanted to be a mother and had no salaried career in mind. After college, I went to law school, passed the bar and joined the family business. Even though it is a great business and dad is the best at what he does, I never really loved life insurance or estate planning the way he and my grandfather did before him. I worked until I became pregnant with my third child and then became a full-time, stay-at-home mother. Without apology, I loved nearly every minute of being the mother of four awesome human beings even though having four post-divorce, often surly teenagers in the house was not super-great.

My marriage ended after 21 years and I, like many other 40-something divorced women, was forced to re-enter the workforce. With a great deal of debt and my kids' college looming, hard work and long hours were in my future. But, the prospect of hard work did not scare me, because, heck, I had birthed four kids in seven years. My father's words came back to me and I intrinsically knew that the combination of need for a salary and passion for my chosen work would ensure success. Failure was not an option.

What to do? What to do? Returning to the practice of law seemed a daunting task because I had not stood before a judge since my mid-twenties. But, the process of divorce and its impact on families was fascinating to me. I carefully observed my divorce lawyer and intuitively knew I could do this job and help both men and women endure the most difficult chapter of their lives.

I certainly could have taken an easier path. Starting a career from scratch as a 44 year old mother is not for sissies. But, finding your passion is a critical element of finding your joy. If you are happy in your work you set the best kind of example for your children. My father set this example for me and gave me the motivation to create a career from the ashes of my divorce.

First I selected my career, and then found a way to accomplish the goal. Volunteering at the local Legal Aid gave me a start. Getting the first paying job was brutal. I asked for numerous favors, learned how to compose a modern resume, and went to coffees, breakfasts and lunches hoping for a job or even a job lead. Whenever I had the opportunity to go to court I would ask the clerk, bailiffs, and administrative professionals for practical advice and then take those cookies as a thank you. I told prospective employers I would *clean the toilets* if

given a chance. Little did I know, my first employer would actually tell me to walk his dog. I attended every continuing education seminar remotely related to my field and learned to be a guardian ad litem, parenting coordinator, collaborative law practitioner and, most recently, a mediator. I did get that first paying job and it ultimately led to my partnership at an outstanding law firm. It was not luck...it was *work*.

I love my job and derive great satisfaction helping people transition from sadness and trauma to peace and happiness. I know I make a difference in the lives of parents and children.

What does the whisper in the back of your mind say to you? Listen carefully...is it social work? A career in nursing? Do you love real estate or fixing up houses? Have you always wanted to teach? If you love what you do you can find a way to make money doing it. You might end up temporarily eating a lot of macaroni and cheese or even rediscover your love for the .99 frozen pizza. Your kids might have to forgo Lululemon leggings and shop (infrequently) from the sale rack at Kohl's, but the life lesson for all of you is priceless. Go for the gold - pick the job you want to do and don't let a job pick you. Good luck - it's a heck of a ride!

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