

# newdimensions

## Career Options for Busy Parents

With an economic downturn comes job instability, repossession of homes and an increase in social deprivation as those who are newly unemployed are placed under pressure to seek employment. According to research published in The Daily Mirror (10.7.09) job losses in the recession are making people drink more to help them cope with the stress. Other affects of the recession include sleepless nights and in worst cases depression. According to a YouGov survey, the top three causes of stress were job insecurity, work and money. More worryingly is that increasingly men are failing to seek professional help or talk to their family about their career problems. Rather than bottle up their feelings, men as well as women should seek help as soon as possible. Below are some tips to deal with careers in the recession.

**Accept no shame:** During the 90's it was believed that women could have it all. The home, kids and domesticity. With this brand of 'superwomen' associated with Nicola Horlick, much pressure was placed on women to have it all and manage home and work life like juggling balls in the air, however increasingly hectic lifestyles meant that many women conceded that whilst it's achievable to have it all we don't have to be perfectionists or be made to feel inadequate if we cannot juggle the many demands placed on us. Similarly, men who were brought up to be the provider of the family and view this as an essential traditional role may feel a blow to their self esteem when they lose their jobs or worry about prospect of losing their jobs. Rather than admitting to feeling down, many men may fear asking for help as they don't want to be seen as vulnerable. Similarly, women who have the engrained belief that 'you should keep get on with things' may feel unable to talk to other's about not coping for shame of ridicule and having their issues trivialised by others. When facing such situations, it's important to seek help.

**Update your CV and skills:** Look at your CV; does it really sell your skills and abilities? Are there any words that powerfully describe your role or is it more descriptive without packing a punch. Examples of such words to include are: (I) managed, organised, delegated, planned etc. At your workplace is there an opportunity to gain new skills as well as doing your current role. Secondly, look at the length of your CV, each industry has its preference for CV lengths – some employers prefer no more than 2 pages whilst others will accept three pages. Check what is required for the jobs you're applying for and make sure it falls within the requirements and don't forget to tailor your CV to the job

specifications. Use relevant transferable skills if your existing skills and experiences are patchy and limited. An employer wants to see that you have all round skills and abilities in and outside of work so sell yourself.

**Consider other career options:** Have you got a great business idea but have been putting it off? Does the recession make you feel even more fearful about starting up a business? If this sounds too daunting for you, have you considered setting up a franchise? It is considered a far safer option of setting up a business and you will get a lot of help from the franchisor. So if you are seeking job security, are disciplined, plus don't mind buying into an existing business and have funds available then this may be the option for you. Research this thoroughly and speak to enterprise agencies in your area that can give you advice and guidance. Also consider freelancing if it is possible to use your existing job skills to seek freelance work.

**Keep your own database:** Keep a database of temporary agencies that can help find you work in your field as well as the name of the consultant working in your desired area(s). Similarly, keep details of every relevant newspaper and internet source where your jobs are advertised as well as any other resources of where you can find work.

**Find the true you:** Whilst job insecurity is worrying, it's also a time to reflect on what makes you tick and can give you the momentum to go for what you really want. Consider what you're good at, what hobbies do you enjoy which can be turned into a career? What have friends and family always said that you would be good at? Then look at what you want. Do you want a job that offers good benefits, job satisfaction, working in a large corporate firm, or a flexible job that fits in with home life? Get specific.

**Smart goals:** Set yourself smart goals. These are goals that are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely. For example: I want to work three days a week as an administrator (Specific). I've looked into the wage of this role and over three days a week I will bring in a desired income to live on (measurable). This is achievable as I have the skills and experience to get this role and have worked in this role previously (attainable and realistic). Given the effort I'm putting into securing this role, I aim to secure this role in three months time (timely). Write what your smart goals are.

**Dress the part:** Dressing in suitable attire for an interview is crucial in helping interviewers determine who gets the job. According to how a person is dressed for an

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Interview (secondsite.com) statistics show that 93% of employers make the hiring decision in the first 7 minutes of any interview. So making a positive impression for an interview is essential.

**Sell skills you had not considered:** Are you a stay at home parent who meets appointments to doctors, health visitors etc. Do you manage your budget to make sure you don't overspend each month? Do you organise the children's chores and have rota's so that tasks run smoothly? Can you see the skills involved in the above? Time management, meeting appointments/punctuality, organising and planning in advance. Whilst some employers don't need to hear every detail of your 'things to do list', you should give them relevant details of your transferable skills which could prove useful for a particular job. So don't be hesitant to express them. After all you deserve a pat on the back for your achievements.

**Remain positive:** It's easier said than done when you're in a firm that's doing poorly, and you don't know where you stand from one day to the next, however worrying endlessly will not help you. As stated before seek help. Speak to a professional or family/friend and better still ensure that you are as productive at work as you can be (without burning yourself out or increasing your stress levels). Demonstrate that you can take on new duties asked of you and prove your dependability. That way if job cuts are made, you will have made a favourable impression with the boss as a hard working, dependable and good worker and you know that you had put 100% into your job.

**Save:** At present with the cut to interest rates, savings have taken a blow and the return on your savings is lower due to the recession. Couple this with the increase in standard of living (food, petrol, bills etc) means that there is less disposable cash to put away, however it is achievable to save for a rainy day. Having something to fall back on in hard times is essential if we are to survive the adverse financial cost of the recession so consider saving and taking out employment insurance to cover any future loss of job.

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