

Re-start Career – A perspective

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There could be many reasons for a pause in one's career – re-location, health issues, family requirements, need for a break, etc. It could be voluntary or forceful. Majority of the persons who experience this pause are women.

One could think, why at all any women would want to get back to work. Why take all the headache of handling family and work and trying to balance both? Why make life hectic? Getting back to work is not less than a miracle for most of them.

In this article we will look at what could be the reasons why someone is looking to get back to work and what stops them. At the end we will see how one can be enabled to get back to work.

Reasons for break

Societal mind-set- Let us first understand why someone takes a break. The society still has “gender bias” and even today certain responsibilities are regarded as being that of the women and certain others of men.

So, aspects like earning money/being the breadwinner for the family, having a career, providing materialistic luxuries to the family (if possible), etc. (seriously cannot think of anything more!!), are regarded as the “MENS's” responsibilities.

Raising kids, imparting good morals / attitude, ensuring they study well and excel, setting up and managing the home, taking care of and being a support system for all family members, being emotionally present for them, managing the finances provided to run the home, and many many more (after the men have taken what he can do), are deemed women's responsibilities.

When society tags as above, majority women are forced to assume their tagged responsibilities, even though they are not so suited to take them up. Many times it is these women who can fair very well in the other aspects of life i.e. the so called men's responsibilities..

Thus, when there is a requirement to start a family, or there is some shortcoming in say the child's health (physical / mental), moral values, studies, etc. or there is a need to move to another city or country only because the man of the house has a better opportunity, etc. it is deemed that the women has to take a pause and fill the gap / support the man by taking the much needed pause in her career.

Why is career needed for a woman?

Most educated women will agree with me that earning money is not the only and main reason for having a career. Ensuring sufficient finances for the family is the man's responsibility and findings of many research show that in the corporate world, women are paid less than men for many reasons. Then why is it so important for her to get back to work?

Financial Independence: When it comes to money the first and foremost aim for a woman is to have financial independence. Any money that she may want to spend for either herself or her family/friends, she would not want to explain to or ask anyone else.

Their Own Identity: The next reason is that many women wish and are capable of making their own identity. Fulfilling this need could be a major reason for getting back.

Multi-talented: Women in India are multi-talented due to the upbringing. If not they become in the course of managing a family. Putting to use these talents and capabilities is another reason why the society or the corporate world should get the women back to work. This would mean that a man should also support in taking care of the family to first improve his productivity at work and second to enable the women in the house to have a career.

Purpose: The need for having a purposeful and fulfilling life is everyone's right in life. This is an ignored secret for ultimate health and happiness of a person. It is time we give this to the women.

Unique qualities: There are some qualities which, majority of times, only a woman has and that is why a few roles are suited only for her, like a teacher, nurse, HR, Psychologist, certain specialisations in the field of medicine, etc. It is time that the society realizes this and enables a woman to get back to ensure that there is no scarcity of qualified persons in these kinds of roles.

More time at her disposal: After a certain age, women do have more time to spare which is when they also look at getting back.

Others: Other reasons to ensure a woman gets back to her career of self employment/professional practice could be providing her the opportunity of continuous learning, meeting new people and broadening perspectives, families need women who are happier, and the society at large needs dynamic women in many roles.

Thus, we can see, women getting back to work is not only their need, but the need of the world at large. It's thus time we identify the roadblocks and see what can be done to enable this.

Roadblocks

I would say the road to re-starting her career appears to be completely blocked. She must make a way. Why are the roads so blocked here? Let's see some of the reasons.

- a. **Guilt** – This is a seed which has been sown by society / family. As mentioned earlier in this article, there are certain deemed responsibilities she has. Any shortcomings therein – the woman of the house would be blamed and, in many cases, she would blame herself. Also, deep down she assumes, the first reason the family (and she herself) would assign to any failure, would be her desire for career.
- b. **Lack of motivation and support** – This I don't think needs any further elaboration for any woman. Hey!! But the men out there, please understand, a small push also sometimes is the only motivation and support that they may require. Empathy, a much-banded good habit to build could be extended to the ladies at home.
- c. **Fear and lack of confidence**– Due to the above there is fear of failure (of fulfilling her responsibilities as a woman and at work) which stops her from exploring the world of her career.
- d. **Natural calling** – Nourishment of the family is her natural calling, and she will surely give that more preference over her career. This is a continuous job which she assumes even after her kids grow up, become independent, etc.
- e. **Putting others first** – This is her natural quality. For the sake of supporting and giving a boost to the man's career, she is not able to get back. This could be due to various reasons, frequent shifts in the city of residence, his erratic work timings, etc.

Enablers

Few things that can be done to enable women to re-start their career and have a purposeful and fulfilling life:

- a. **Support system** – This is the most important enabler. The need is to enable a woman at her peak time to have a career. Currently, she also has the responsibility of extending and extended family. At such a time, we can provide her affordable and accessible support systems which would then give her time and peace of mind to continue with her career.

These support systems could be

- i. **Partaking of Care for children**, which would be best if extended by her own family (parents, in-laws and to some extent spouse) . This could keep her at peace to continue her career. In cases this is not possible, existence of good quality, approachable and affordable childcare is the need of the hour.

- ii. **Preference for female employees** – Once people realise the efficiency and qualities that a woman brings into the workplace, this is inevitable.
 - iii. **Others** – A family and society that motivates her can make a lot of difference for her, flexible timings etc. can also make a huge difference.
- b. **Emotional Support Training** – Motivators & professional/ life coaches could empower them by guiding them to find their strengths to focus on. They could also look at the limitations/ mental blocks (disempowering emotions) which are stopping them. To mention a few: self-belief, assumption of lack of support, decisiveness, conflict resolution ways among others.
 - c. **Knowledge updations** / refresher courses (in area of experience before break) to be able to get current and overcome the fear of being irrelevant or redundant.
 - d. **Skilling Courses** – There is a need for more focused courses which are specifically aimed at skilling women to be able to restart their career.
 - e. **Mentoring and Coaching-** At this stage hand-holding by successful women to take up coaching and mentoring would be impactful.
 - f. **Work from home (WFH) options** – At a time when she is low on confidence, it would be easy for her to try WFH options and then slowly transition to being at office.
 - g. **Believe in Achiever's Mind-set:** There are many inspiring women who have done well later in life or after taking a break. One is never too old to follow one's heart.

A poll created by the writer at the link¹ in the footnote can be accessed to give insights on what people think is important to enable re-starting of career.

It is time that we realize, the need for woman to have or re-start career is more for the betterment of the society at large than a need only of the woman.

¹ https://www.linkedin.com/posts/madhukar-n-hiregange-32980910_capractice-professional-empowerment-activity-7187101653857120257-4su1?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop