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Women on the Move: 5 Keys to Building a Meaningful Career

The risk of women putting their careers on hold or dropping out of the work force is higher than ever before. It was challenging enough pre-Covid to juggle caregiving responsibilities, personal commitments, and a busy career. Since March 2020, the idea of building a more fulfilling career seems like an unattainable dream. **Where should you put your focus to overcome obstacles and keep growing? What matters most to building and sustaining a meaningful career?**

Research shows that internal happiness is intricately linked to professional success, yet people often make career choices based primarily on external measures such as compensation, position and reputation. This can be compounded by focusing too much on what others think you should do. Consider what would be different and better in your career if you focused on these five key factors.

5 Keys to Building a More Meaningful Career.

- 1. Autonomy and self-direction.** This includes having some control over how and when you accomplish your work and being empowered to say yes or no to what you do, at least some of the time. It means being in charge of your schedule, able to influence and have input into decisions that impact you.
 - What does autonomy mean to you?
 - How much autonomy and self-direction do you currently have?
 - What can you do to become more empowered?
 - What are your choices?
 - What are you willing to risk to gain more autonomy?
 - What boundaries do you need to put in place? What do you need to ask for?
- 2. Relationships and connection.** As social animals we need relationships and connection with others to find happiness and fulfillment. Relating and connecting in a meaningful way with people you work with is an essential element of finding long term career happiness.
 - How connected do you feel to your work colleagues, boss or clients?
 - Which relationships are most important to you?
 - Which relationships do you want to invest in professionally? Personally?
 - How do you stay connected in a virtual world?
 - How do you show appreciation to others?
 - What are you doing to ask clearly for what you need?



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- 3. Competence.** Developing your competence in a skill that you enjoy using is another essential ingredient to happiness and success. It's not enough to just be good at something. Mastering your skills so that you can make a meaningful contribution will build self-confidence and will enable you to feel proud of your value.
 - Which skills have you mastered (or want to master) that you enjoy most?
 - How do you want to make a contribution?
 - How do you limit your potential because of a mistaken belief that you do is just not good enough?
 - What supports and resources do you need to build confidence in your skills and knowledge?
 - What would you be doing differently if you believed in yourself as the best [fill in the blank] ever?

- 4. Value alignment.** Understanding what's meaningful to you and finding a way to align your career pursuits with your core values takes awareness and effort. For many people it is a lifelong journey.
 - Can you describe times in your life when the work you were doing aligned with your core values?
 - How did you know it was happening?
 - What needs to happen in your current work to bring it more in line with your values?
 - What's so important about this?
 - How might you adjust your perspective?

- 5. Integrating work and life priorities:** Understanding that priorities shift and change throughout the lifespan, this factor relates to the idea of work-life balance – an impossible gold standard. Instead of striving for a perfect equilibrium, get clear on what's most important and be prepared to make difficult choices about how to allocate your time and energy to maximize your potential.
 - What are your most important priorities right now?
 - How much attention are you giving to your top three priorities?
 - What can you let go of to make room for something else?
 - How well does your career allow you to live the life you want?
 - What's working well? What needs to change?
 - What can you do differently to shift the balance?

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