



Give yourself a New Year career makeover

At the age of 50, Liz Granato changed from being vice principal of a language school to becoming a life coach. Here she describes how you too might be able to make a career changing decision.

Do you feel dissatisfied with your career or job, but have no idea how to change it? Do you have a secret dream of doing something entirely different? Surveys show that one of the most common regrets of retired people is that they stayed in jobs that at best didn't fulfil their ambitions and at worst made them extremely unhappy. So what better time to start making some changes than now at the start of the New Year?

Where to begin?

First, you need to take a long, hard look at your present situation and job and list the reasons why you are dissatisfied with it. Is there something intrinsically wrong with the job, the management or the conditions of work? Are the values of the organisation, management or colleagues at variance with your own? Is the balance between time spent at work and your leisure time wrong? Are you bored and under challenged or are you permanently stressed with too much expected of you?

Next, look at your options. Do you have a dream job to aim for, an interest or a passion? Would you like to become freelance or start your own business?

Next comes the reality check. Is it possible to turn the dream job into reality, the hobby or skill into a thriving business? What is needed to make it possible: further training, further education, finance?

Then you need to set yourself goals and time limits. Keep to them and you're on your way to a more fulfilling future.

Some of us need no help, we can start, continue and finish the changing process on our own. But others would welcome some support through all the stages, to help us make the realistic choices, to help us set the goals and keep to targets. If you think you would like to make changes and could benefit from some objective support, then Career Coaching could be for you.

Contact Liz on info@procecsscoaching.co.uk or 020 8365 3835 for more information or to arrange a free introductory session.

One-woman Bridge of Faith

By Daphne Chamberlain



"In the Koran," said Shama Husain, "there is a beautiful version of the birth of Jesus. It tells how Mary shook dates from a palm tree to strengthen her in labour. Is that why dates are traditionally eaten at Christmas?"

Shama, who lives in Ashburnham Close, gives presentations to children and adults under the heading of Bridges in Faith. She wants to help them understand Islam and its links with other religions.

Judaism, Christianity and Islam sprang from the same root, all recognising the Old Testament prophets (and the Angel Gabriel). She told me that Muslims believe in the virgin birth, though interestingly there is no Joseph in their version of the Nativity story. They honour Jesus, but do not believe in the Resurrection or in original sin.

Born in Pakistan, Shama has a BA in Economics from Punjab University, and an MA from Peshawar. Her two children were educated in England, and she has been in and out of the UK since she was 20. In 1992, as a mature student, she took a BA in Education at Cambridge.

Respecting all faiths

In her first teaching job, in Peterborough, she realised that her mainly Muslim pupils didn't know enough about other faiths. At her next school, in Bedford, she felt that the mainly white

children didn't know enough about Islam. So she began to hold different faith assemblies in schools, also including Judaism, Sikhism and Hinduism.

She herself had been educated in an Anglican school and in a convent. "I can sing carols with the best of them," she told me.

By the time she moved to London, in 2002, she had had enough of teaching, but not enough of education. "The Prophet Muhammad was unlettered," she says, "but his companions were not. He stressed the value of education, but also believed that people should be easy and comfortable with religion."

On today's controversial topics, Shama believes that the best veil is that of the heart, and that "if you kill one person, you kill all humanity".

Nowadays, she speaks about Islam to schoolchildren and adult groups all over the UK. She says it is "magical" meeting these groups. "I feel truly humbled when someone wants to know about Islam."

Shama Husain can be contacted on 07976 379252 or at shamahusain@fastmail.fm.

Party for young and old

By Pam Kent

A party for elderly neighbours and residents of Nazareth House was organised and held by Year 10 pupils of Bishop Douglass School on 13 December.

Pupils had spent much time fund-raising over the year and about 50 guests were treated to a superb Christmas dinner, entertained by staff and pupils, and handed gifts by Father Christmas. Two pupils were appointed to each table, ensuring that everyone was well looked after, refilling glasses,

serving and clearing tables. Everyone joined in the singing and a good time was had by all. Head teacher Angela Murphy is anxious to uphold the current good relationship the school has with local residents and it is hoped that following greater canvassing more residents will attend next year.

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Anthony Young at the awards ceremony

Anthony's a winner

By John Lawrence

Anthony Young is 44 and has moderate learning difficulties. He is extremely articulate but, until recently, could barely read or write and had never used a computer.

Now a student at the Hampstead Garden Suburb Institute in East Finchley, he has overcome many of the challenges he was facing to be named London winner in a national student award scheme.

It is a major achievement for Anthony and recognition of all the hard work he has put in to his Basic Skills course at the Institute.

Course leader John O'Brien said that at the start of the year Anthony was nervous and was lacking in confidence in his abilities.

He said: "His past educational experiences as an adult had been very negative: he had been told he was unteachable as he did not know the alphabet. Nonetheless, Anthony attempted every task bravely and with the support of his family, did regular homework each week to practise writing the letters of the alphabet.

"This resulted in him passing his Entry Level 1 in reading, speaking and listening and ICT skills. We expect he will pass his writing, numeracy and personal development awards soon as well.

"Anthony is such a diligent student, and has overcome a great deal of fear this year. Passing his qualifications meant everything to him."

Being named the London

regional winner of the NCFE National Student of the Year Awards meant Anthony received a certificate and a cheque for £150.

Anthony said: "I can't believe it, I've never won anything before in my life." He has recently moved into a new flat in Fairway, High Barnet, and plans to use his prize money to buy a stereo.

His achievement is all the more impressive because the award scheme attracted entries from more than 200 colleges around the country that offer further education qualifications and were not limited to students with learning disabilities.

Highgate and holidays

Scenes of Highgate and local festivals were the centrepieces of the annual exhibition of paintings by the Highgate Watercolour Group.

Twenty-seven artists put their work on show and up for sale at Lauderdale House, Highgate recently, each with their own style and approach. The group was set up in 1980 and is part of the Highgate Society.

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