

It's never too late,

Changing careers in mid-life is no oddity. You only have to be in tune

By Muhammad Iqbal JUNE 8.1.02

IF you do the work you love, you will love the work you do. Sounds simple enough, but is it? Does our Pakistani culture really support and encourage people to choose a career based on what they love? While moving through our educational system, how many opportunities are we given to uncover and explore our natural talents, abilities, intelligence, and to learn how to apply them to our true calling? Do our schools teach us how to find and pursue our purpose in life and to follow our passions?

Most of us grow up in an environment where our parents, teachers, or friends all seem to know what is best for us. They are quick to tell us which career we are best suited

for and what skills and education we should acquire to pursue that career, all without taking the time to find out who we really are, or what is in our hearts. We are encouraged to prepare for the jobs that pay the highest, that have the most security, that follow our parents' profession or that are in abundant supply. And because we usually do what they suggest, we empower them to decide how we will spend the largest portion of our life.

Then there is the other side of the coin in which we are given no guidance whatsoever. We are not encouraged to develop our potential. The biggest problem with doing what is expected or what is popular is that we usually end up sticking with a job that is only marginally satisfying, then live a life filled with complaints and regrets.

Why does anyone stay in a job that they hate or that is a dead

don't seem to understand your need for professional fulfilment, and they automatically assume that you would fail. What is really going on with them is that they couldn't imagine succeeding if they had chucked their job to do what they loved, and so they project their own fears while trying to influence you.

If you think that other people's opinions of your ability to succeed holds more validity than your own inner knowledge, then perhaps they are right and you should stay in your 'safe' job. If you don't believe that you can succeed, then most likely you are right, you can't. If, on the other hand, your desire to have a more rewarding and fulfilling career outweighs your fear of failure or rejection, then the next question to answer is, "what would I love to do?"

For those standing at the crossroads, there are three options: do what is expected of you; do what is popular, pays the best or offers the most security; or do what naturally extends from who you are. If you choose to go for option no three, here is a guide to move ahead"

BUILD A CAREER PROFILE: An inspired career is a career that is a natural extension of who you are. Explore what activities and actions bring you the most joy in life. It is when you are doing the things that you love, that you are at your most alive state — energized, passionate, enthusiastic, vibrant, creative and productive.

An inspired career evolves from your unique personal profile, which is an inventory of your special talents, abilities, preferences, aspirations, limitations

innermost passions and desires. Who you are is what makes you unique. At the core of an inspired career resides an intimate awareness of self's assets. Without knowing those, it will be difficult to come to know who you are and what you are capable of being.

REVIVAL OF DREAMS: To discover who we are, we have to reconnect with our dreams. As children, we all dreamed of what we would be when we grew up. We tried on various hats and roles, experimenting with what felt good to us. Artist, doctor, sci-

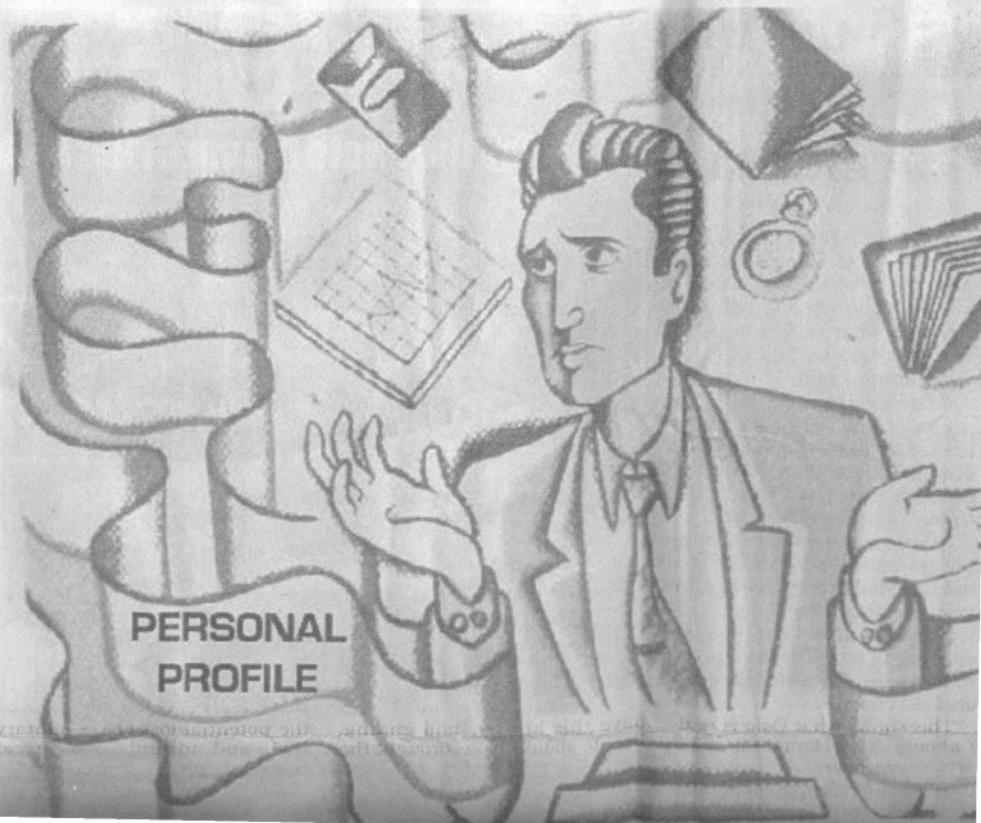
Such individuals often emerge as strong and confident in their professional lives, even while their social self remains immature and insecure. Visions begin to form, and they feel the urge to change tracks. But for these late-bloomers, it takes a while to really know what they actually want to do with their lives. As these visions grow, so does their craving for more meaning and purpose in life. The dreams become dormant volcanoes, blazing just below the surface, waiting for an eruption to release the built-up energy. The

what you love?

NATURAL INTELLIGENCE: Everyone is gifted at birth with natural talents, abilities and intelligence, enabling people to do those things easily, without even thinking about what one is doing, and often are those things that one loves doing the most. In others, the intelligence lies dormant until something triggers it. There are many tales of people who, in the later years of their life, began to explore their talents for writing or painting, and ended up being more famous for these newly-revealed talents.

Strategy

PERSONAL PROFILE



really

work with your inner self

Management

Human behaviour

Psychology

TRY TO BE REALISTIC: You need to be realistic, but at the same time, creative, constantly generating new ideas to move your career to the next level. To produce effective ideas, the following method may be used:

- You will need a starting point. You will not be able to fly from Karachi to Islamabad until you first arrive at the airport. If you don't exactly know where you are, you will need a map to pinpoint your current location and then gradually work your way to the airport. It is imperative that you establish where

want. To give your ideas the best chance to develop, you need to switch off outside influences. Tolerate nothing. Eradicate the distractions, the daily frustrations and predictable dramas of your life once and for all. Don't just fix the problem; re-design your routine so the predictable irritations can't ever bother you again.

- Look at parallel problems and solutions. Relate your current problem to one that you had in the past and check for parallels. The way(s) earlier problems were solved can

negative thoughts that can almost act as a barrier to its resolution. Just look at the goal. How happy will you be when you arrive at the solution?

- Daydream. Let your creative subconscious work for you. It is no strange coincidence that your sub-conscious continues to work regardless of what you are doing in physical terms. How often have you been doing something totally unrelated and then suddenly an idea snaps into your mind? Often? Sometimes? Never? In any case after you have put considerable time into solving your problem, you will find that your inner mind works for you. Sometimes if you try too hard to solve something, you end up with nothing but major frustration. So, have a break and sleep on it. You may be surprised at how successful switching off can be.

- Alter your routine regularly. Have you ever noticed how easily we accumulate habits. Many habits can actually choke



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not encouraged to develop the potential. The biggest problem with doing what is expected or what is popular is that we usually end up sticking with a job that is only marginally satisfying, then live a life filled with complaints and regrets.

Why does anyone stay in a job that they hate or that is a dead end or that is unfulfilling? Because the job pays the bill, because it supports a lifestyle that one is afraid of giving up, because it offers security, because it is expected. The majority of the people hates their jobs, or at best, finds them unrewarding, unfulfilling or unchallenging. Is it any wonder why people are so stressed out and plagued by disease and chronic illnesses?

The first hurdle to overcome that is inherent in choosing to do what one loves is, 'what will other people think or say?'. In their well-meaning way, people will try to convince you of the 'foolishness' of your desire to leave a secure and well-paying

that you love, that you are at your most alive state — energized, passionate, enthusiastic, vibrant, creative and productive.

An inspired career evolves from your unique personal profile, which is an inventory of your special talents, abilities, preferences, aspirations, limitations and motivations and your unique niche in life. Once you have discovered in which direction you want to express yourself, then your professional profile, which is an inventory of the skills, education and credentials you have acquired along the way, will help you to identify gaps that will need to be filled to reach your dream career.

PERSONAL PROFILE: Your unique personal profile is an inventory of your special talents, and limitations. You are a complex, unique and individual being, who at any given moment in time is a total of your dreams, your personality, your natural and acquired talents and abilities, your personal and professional experiences and your

entist, educationist and banker; we pretended to be all. And we didn't just dream about what we would do when we grew up, we dreamed about how it would feel.

Some of us grew into those dreams. And for some the dreams changed. However, for many of us, by the time we had reached our thirties, we had exchanged our dreams for a mortgage payment, sacrificed them for relationships, or in order to raise children. Others didn't even start dreaming until they reached adulthood or much later in their adult life.

eruption comes one fine morning when the realization dawns on them that the dreams could be fulfilled.

MOVING ON: It is never really too late to connect with your dreams, or to have new ones. There are hundreds of stories about people who decided to change their careers in mid-life or even later. The common theme among all such is their strong desire to follow their heart. And we are never too old to make those changes. Would you rather spend a few years loving what you do, or a lifetime of regrets, wishing you had done

Some people have a natural talent for working with numbers, often being able to juggle late figures in their head. Others have a natural propensity for things visual, excelling in art and creative endeavours. Others have a knack for understanding and relating to people.

While everyone would like to believe that they are perfect, can do it all, you will want to be realistic about your natural abilities. For instance, preterite love working with numbers when you find it boring could interfere with your aim to pursue the career of your dream.

PERSONAL PROFILE





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you are before looking to progress.

- Brainstorming is another brilliant method. It is simply when a group of people get together and write down as much as they can in relation to the objectives outlined. Don't worry about strategic planning or anything like that. Concentrate solely on idea generation. Place a time limit and choose location and the time well so that they are conducive to performance. You will be able to move mountains after a very healthy brainstorming session.

- Focus entirely on what you

assist you greatly in generating ideas to solve subsequent situations that present themselves. Think laterally, think vertically and think logically. You can then draw on the past successes and take them a step further with the challenge of today.

- Look at each task as a challenge. It is true that if you look at a problem simply as a 'problem' then that is exactly how many will look at it. Sure it is a problem and, therefore, needs a solution. The word 'problem' tends to sum up negative thoughts within us. It is these

your creativity. To continue generating healthy ideas to better our work surroundings, we must continually be looking for newness. Familiarity is very good in that it makes us feel very secure, but it is this very security that closes our mind to change and restricts our creative abilities.

- Carry a Notepad. A pen with a pocket size pad is brilliant as you can capture every idea that comes to you. It's absolutely useless to say you will write it down later, as chances are very slim that you will ever do it at all. □