

Can You Really Just “Follow Your Bliss?”

How to Successfully Navigate a Career Transition When You Have Every Reason to Stay Put



When you find yourself at a career crossroads, which way should you turn? Fear of failure (or financial insecurity) looms, and the weight of expectations and responsibilities can keep you stuck. Maxims like, “follow your bliss” make it sound easy. But is it ever really that simple? Career Crossroads Coach and BIEN ETRE expert, Lou Hynes, specialises in helping senior executives step away from their corporate identity and embrace their true calling. She shares her thoughts about what holds us back, and how to find a practical way forward.

The landscape of work is changing. Since the start of the pandemic, the challenges of remote working and furlough have served to highlight the fact that many of us have been surviving rather than thriving in our corporate careers for years. Parents, especially women, are dealing with high levels of stress at work. Hybrid and home workers feel obliged to clock on when sick. Employees feel underappreciated and burnt out. And

while 70% of us derive our sense of purpose from work, only 15% get the meaning we crave from our nine-to-five.

Lou says phrases like, “follow your bliss” can compound the challenges we face. “There’s a balance to be had in terms of feeling fulfilled and being able to pay the mortgage,” she suggests. “Yes, if you have a supportive partner or savings, you can leave the corporate world and set up your own business, but not everyone is in a position to do that.”

A career crossroads can be an exciting, invigorating time. It can also elicit an internal struggle. We often arrive at that transitional place as we approach a big birthday. We skid to a halt, asking, “Was the last decade what I wanted it to be? Is the next going to be better? Am I where I hoped I’d be by now?” There’s the dawning realisation that life is short and family time is precious. Suddenly, the desire to transition to more meaningful work seems urgent.

Hundreds of years ago, the Persian poet, Rumi, wrote: “Let the beauty we love be what we do.” But trace this verse back to its opening, and the first stanza is stark. “Today, like every other day, we wake up empty and frightened.”

Our need for change can come with a whole host of fears. We are conditioned to follow a linear career path, and the idea of leaving what’s familiar fills us with anxiety. On a purely practical level, we all need to earn a living. To stay safe, we doubt ourselves, silencing the small voice within. We hold on for too long, refusing to let go because we don’t feel ready. Our identity falters as we hang paralysed between the old and the new. We force ourselves to shrink so we fit into places we have outgrown.

In his bestselling book, *Anam Cara*, the philosopher and poet, John O’Donohue, urges: “We should never allow our

fears or the expectations of others to set the frontiers of our destiny... When we rediscover our childlike nature we enter into a world of gentle possibility... The false burdens fall away. We come into rhythm with ourselves.”

With all this in mind, how can we build the courage to make the leap? And how can we be sure our next move is the right one?

You don't have to make ANY big changes

The first important thing to understand is that a career transition doesn't always involve a massive leap. “You can move up, down, sideways or out,” says Lou. “There are multiple options, most of which you won't have considered. One of those, even if you believe yourself to be at a crossroads, is to stay where you are, to find ways to feel more fulfilled and content within what you already do. Whether or not you are moving jobs or switching career, it's really important to find happiness where you are now, or you won't find it where you're going.”

“Happiness always starts with you. Which is why a big part of the work I do with clients is looking at the subconscious beliefs that hold them back. It's all very well figuring out who you are, what your values are, what you want to do and what your next step is... If you still have negative beliefs, at some point down the line they will become an obstacle to your success.”

3 Steps to Get Unstuck

1. Unlock your core values

Many of us think we know what our values are, or we choose values we think we *should* have. When you really identify your core values, they become your inner GPS. This allows you to easily identify when an opportunity aligns with what you want and need.

2. Start a daily gratitude practice

When you begin a gratitude practice, it may initially feel forced or clunky, and that's okay. If you persist, making time for it each day, you will find your focus begins to shift away from any sense of lack or fear. This is a vital step, not only for your ongoing happiness, but in accepting abundance and success when it comes.

Lou encourages her clients to identify gratitude in three areas: “One at the macro level – something you're grateful for in your wider world. Something on a micro level, maybe just the smell of your morning coffee. And the one people often find hardest – something you're grateful for about yourself.” This last one is crucial. In the push to succeed, many of us reach a crossroads without ever having stopped to appreciate ourselves. But this small act of self-love forms the bedrock of confidence and informs our values and decisions as we move forward.

3. Look for clues

“We often leave a trail of breadcrumbs,” explains Lou. “The things you enjoyed as a child, or that you can talk about for half an hour without notes... In the corporate world, we've been told what we are good at, and we forget what we love and why we started in our career in the first place. Go back and look for clues!”

Stepping Into the Future

“Your subconscious knows what you want to do. It has the answers,” Lou concludes. “But we're so used to thinking rationally, we ignore the pull of what our heart is telling us. It will keep popping up until you listen. That's the exciting part!”

Every career crossroads is unique. You may already have a clear idea of what you want to do but no real plan to get there. Or you may just have an underlying sense that there's something more – or at least, something *different* – to discover.

No matter how big this decision seems, you don't need to have everything perfectly in place before you make a move. Begin by taking the time to uncover exactly who you are, defining your skills, capabilities, and values. From there, you will be better able to see the path ahead. And then, all that's left to do is to set out on that road with confidence and joy. One baby step at a time.

If you're at a career crossroads, and unsure which way to turn, Lou is here to help you figure it out. She will work with you to uncover your values, build your confidence, and find the spark that lights you up on the inside, filling your life with purpose.

[Visit Lou's profile to get more information and to book a free discovery call.](#)

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