
TED TALK

***HOW TO GET BACK
TO WORK AFTER A
CAREER BREAK***

CAROL FISHMAN COHEN

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

INSTRUCTIONS

Individually or as a group, watch the TED talk “How to Get Back to Work After a Career Break” (available at leanin.org/career-break). Then use the questions below for a group discussion.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- “Relaunchers” is Carol’s term for people returning to work after an extended career break—for example, because of health issues, elder care, or child care. Veterans, military spouses, repatriating expats, and people coming out of retirement—they could all be considered “relaunchers.” The challenges they face are real. People who switch careers can face similar obstacles, even if technically they’ve never taken a break from the workforce. If you fall into any of these groups, share one or two challenges you’ve encountered. How did you handle them?
- Because women do the lion’s share of caregiving work in their families—often taking years out of the workforce to raise children, for example—most relaunchers are women. Some of them rise to great heights; Sandra Day O’Connor was a relauncher. Do you know other women—famous or not—who took a career break? If you know them personally, what was their experience like? If they’re famous, what have they said publicly about their relaunching experience?
- The relaunchers Carol works with often have doubts about their professional skills. Doubt can affect women at all stages of their career, not just after a break. You’ve probably heard the stat that men typically apply to jobs when they meet 60 percent of hiring criteria, while women wait until they meet 100 percent. Have you ever passed on applying for a position because you didn’t perfectly match the job description? What advice would you give a friend who’s hesitant to apply for a great job, even if she doesn’t meet every single requirement?
- Carol recommends that relaunchers take their job search offline by talking to everyone they know about returning to work. Reaching out to your network is great advice for job seekers in general. If you’ve been hesitant to lean on your community during a job search, what held you back? What tips do you have for someone who’s unsure of how to start networking for opportunities?

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- A “returnship” is a short-term paid position designed for a professional who’s been out of the workforce for several years—essentially, an internship for an experienced worker. Before watching this talk, had you heard of returnships? What are the benefits and challenges a relauncher might encounter in a returnship?
 - What’s one key takeaway from the talk that you’d share with someone else?
 - Read more about relaunchers in Carol’s [Harvard Business Review article](#) and get tips for setting up a returnship at your company.