

# Coaching at Work

## “pp22-23 Trouble”

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# THE PATH LESS STRESSED

**A corporate high flier finds herself at a careers crossroads. How can this executive choose a path that maintains a positive career, while balancing work commitments with personal ones?**

Andrea has been employed by a leading global bank for nearly 20 years. She is considered a high flier and is a member of the company's leadership team. The bank values its employees and has a record of longevity with its people.

Andrea never planned her career; she simply accepted the promotions and opportunities. She is considered the 'go-to girl' for executives wanting to 'get things done'.

Andrea is now being encouraged to become one of the bank's regional chief operating officers. The area is running inefficiently and Andrea believes she can produce results. Furthermore, the role could give her what she needs to leave the bank and try something new.

But she is also concerned. At this stage in her life she is not looking to work more than she already does, and instead wants to focus on her personal life. As a single woman with no children, Andrea enjoys a flexible lifestyle and, though she is very content, she is also afraid that she will one day regret that she devoted everything to her career, and will wind up alone.

One of her previous managers has suggested there is another role for her, which may be less interesting, but which would allow her to focus on the personal aspects of her life.



## ELIZABETH BARREKETTE

Managing partner  
BRK Partnership

Andrea's possible interventions fall into two, not necessarily mutually exclusive, categories. One path is for her to explore what she wants now versus what she thinks she might want (or regret) later. Has she had any experience of highly charged, as well as less challenging, roles?

She needs to be sure she is not simply imagining the delights of a leisurely work life as opposed to knowing what keeps her energised.

Then there's the issue of regret. She hasn't missed having a family so far, so how does she know she'll regret it later? Can she be sure she won't regret giving up the new role? Andrea could converse with others who have faced similar work/life questions to see what 'regret' truly means after the fact.

The second path is to explore if she can instil her desired work/life balance into the new role. Can she still be recognised and effective if she does not always work above and beyond? Is there anyone in the organisation that can act as her benchmark?

She can explore what value her additional efforts bring, and how she might cope with a new work ethic.

Changes do not have to happen immediately and completely. Can Andrea allow herself some time for experimentation? What small steps can she implement? For instance, what would happen if she turned off her phone on Sundays?

The more real examples of day-to-day work activity that can be tested, the easier it will be for Andrea to assess what works for her and what impact a change (or lack of) would really have.

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## NAMRATA ARORA SINGH (CPC)

Founder and chief coach,  
Growth Cube, India

Andrea represents a typical 'life redesign' coaching opportunity. A life coach can work with her to figure out her priorities and get her excited about the prospect of crafting a life of her choosing. Her career choice would then emerge as a by-product of the redesign.

We would start by using a profiling tool and powerful questions to help with introspection and get a basic understanding of the kind of person she is, the things that have always

excited her and the things she really loves to do.

Another critical question is, what does she value highly as an individual? This introspection is the toughest step in getting the right output. Even though Andrea is in a high-powered job with plenty of work years behind her, she may never have done this.

The next step would be to encourage her to imagine and put her dream life on paper, using words or pictures to describe it. What really helps is to chart out a

week in as much detail as possible. The wheel of life might be a useful tool.

Superimposing her priorities and passion on this might throw up some revelations. It might reveal that she needs fundamentally to restructure her work life – perhaps getting into a morning workout regime or relocating to a different part of the city. The key is to enable her to feel she can live a happy life with what she has now.

Being able to get her excited about life and empowering her to reconstruct it, might be a powerful way to activate her decision-making.

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