

## **The Relaunching of a Midlife Mom** (a 3-minute read)

At midlife I had hopes of reentering a workforce I had set aside 20 years earlier so that I could fully focus on raising a family and managing a home. I believed that was how I was supposed to contribute to the betterment of all. But after recently persevering through “too much,” *my* betterment didn’t seem so better.

As a result, the past four years I’ve laid low under the radar of social media chatter so I could give proper attention to the complexities of my own life, too exhausted and too disinterested in putting myself out there to a bigger universe than the one I was currently trying to navigate. My little spinning ball of a world was hard enough.

The hardest and most heart-wrenching was/is when friends of my two sons died, one in July 2017 and the other ten weeks later. They were 19 and 24 years old. I loved these young men and am close to their grieving mothers. These are the only words I can muster to describe such tragedy: deeply sad, deeply changing, deeply unfair. Seven months later my beloved grandmother passed away, followed by the unexpected death of my 57-year-old brother—stirring emotions and family craziness in the aftermath. In 14 months, I attended four significant funerals that rocked my world, as well as the worlds of many loved ones.

Leading up to and through all of this, I separated, divorced, and moved out of my familiar home and community and into an unfamiliar empty nest. I purchased a small home in an eclectic neighborhood, hunkered down through two hurricanes, experienced a freak accident that required 1½ years of dental reconstruction, and lived with the ongoing fear of possibly losing another loved one. Still, I somehow managed to complete two certifications (to supplement my antiquated college degree) and to write and launch a book that promoted “momentous living,” only to set it aside to sort through four years of a grief and disbelief that extended beyond my toolbox.

With the freshness of 2019 however, and with perhaps some of the “new year, new you” hoopla quieting down, I’m stepping out to take a deep breath and...to engage. Not that I especially feel like it but because Betsy Gardner Eckbert, President/CEO of Winter Park Chamber of Commerce, said so. “Post four things on LinkedIn before the next Relaunch class.”

What I heard Betsy say was, “Go dance naked in the wilds of our world.”

*I’m not ready to do that, I thought. I need to fix my hair and apply some make-up. And I most certainly need to get dressed. I am not ready.*

But I had written in my Relaunch binder: “Progress. Not perfection.” And there...it still was...in black ink...taunting me. I’m all about stretching beyond comfort, but this Relaunch thing—career reentry for professional women—would challenge even Brené Brown’s vulnerability.

I am a mom though; and motherhood teaches bravery and perseverance (among other things). And so...here goes Betsy Gardner Eckbert. This is what I'd like to post:

You reminded my fellow re-launchers and me that our time away from careers was not lost time. That everything we did to manage homes, people, problems (there were plenty of those), while also freely contributing (and I mean this literally) to our communities and schools and nonprofits and places of worship, that everything we did has made us smarter and wiser, *not* less competent and out-of-date. Everything we did for "the betterment of all" is fully transferrable.

For example, a quote that always makes me smile exemplifies this perfectly, "A worried mother does better research than the FBI." I'm not a researcher, technically speaking anyway, but when my son was diagnosed with dyslexia, I became one of the best. *And* when my former husband traveled too much when our kids were young, I mastered kickboxing (much healthier than drugs and alcohol). *And* when my family was fortunate enough to travel internationally for 100 days, I switched to full-time travel agent, homeschool teacher, and logistics director with no prior experience or training. I just figured it out. *And* when my family recently faced a crisis, my resourceful nature automatically kicked in, quickly compiling information, building a support system, and ultimately focusing on solutions.

I say this, not just for myself, but for all the silver-haired women who have done their duties at home and in their communities, who are now freer to give of their time and talents because their children have been launched, and who possess core competencies and a skillset that are valuable *and* transferrable.

And do I also dare say, that regardless of life's inevitable turbulence, midlife moms possess the audacity to still travel, to still explore, learn, and grow, and to still dance in the wilds of our world despite how naked we might feel?

Yes. I dare say.