

## Follow Your Dreams

When I met my husband we were 16 and 17 years old. I never really imagined that I would be where I am today. He graduated high school, and college, and went on through Reserved Officer Training Corps (ROTC). I graduated high school, went to college part time, and worked. My first significant job was at JCPenney in the shoe department. From there, I got recruited to work for Banister Shoe (a division of Nine West Group, Inc.). I worked at Banister as a manager until Kevin got his orders to our first duty station, Fort Hood, TX. I wasn't done with college; I didn't have any part of a degree, and now I wouldn't have a job. This was not how I envisioned my life.

Fortunately, I was able to transfer to a Nine West Group, Inc. store in Austin, TX. I went ahead and moved down in advance because he had to attend Officer Basic Course (OBC) at Fort Sill, OK. After a few months in Austin working at the shoe store, I was recruited by Old Navy. I went to work for an Old Navy in Temple, TX. I was moving up in the world! My drive was considerably less and my pay went up as well. A few more months went by and I earned the General Manager position at the Old Navy in the Killeen Mall, right outside of post. I still had this nagging feeling of failure from not finishing my degree. I had left college when I left Missouri and didn't really want to work retail the rest of my life. Still, the money was good and Kevin and I had started our new life together.

Along the journey I think I lost part of me. I know the money was good. I know it kept me busy when Kevin was away. But, I also knew I didn't want to do retail forever. I knew that I wasn't ever seeing my husband even when he was home because I worked so much. Ultimately, I knew that I had to do something different if we wanted a family. This military lifestyle didn't indulge him to being able to raise a family without someone a bit more stable around. I knew with the job I had I couldn't offer that stability either. We chose the Army as our life and a family was our dream. Someone had to make a change.

The day we chose the Army as our "career" I told my husband there was no going back. Right then, right there, I decided that the best thing for us to do was to 'suck it up' while we were young and change the path up a bit. I quit my job, registered for classes, and started working at a bank where I could go to night school and work during the day. The pay was less than half of what I made and I had a horrible time getting hired because they wondered why I wanted to work for such a drastic difference. Somehow though, it all worked out

Within the next two years I was ready to graduate college, and I was pregnant. I was able to leave my job at the bank to stay home to raise our daughter because Kevin had gained enough rank, we had a few pay raises, and were able to make it without me working. It was picture perfect, or was it? I was miserable. It wasn't that I didn't love our daughter. It wasn't that this wasn't my choice. It just wasn't what I had planned, and I'm a planner.

Getting out of the military at that point wasn't an option for our family. We needed that stability and we had built everything we had in the past five years to be able to do the very thing we were doing right then. So why was I so unhappy?

I know why now. I didn't have anything of my own. I could take care of Wrena and the house with my hands tied behind my back. The type of personality I have lends itself to needing someone to tell me I'm doing a good job and that they appreciate me. I know you know as well as I do babies don't say "hey thanks mom, you're doing a good job, I appreciate you, here's your annual raise." I couldn't in my right mind go back to work and justify working just to pay for daycare. Besides, I didn't really want to go back to work. Who was I kidding? Right then, I kept choosing to be miserable. It was much easier than trying to change.

I decided the only way I would be happy is if I worked for myself. Through a long drawn out journey that very decision is what brings me to you today. I started an internet business that led to another internet business where I motivated and empowered others to build their businesses for themselves. That internet business led me down a path that ran straight into the idea of Army Wife Talk Radio. The rest is history. I now work from home, am about to welcome our second daughter, and through perseverance and arming myself with resources and knowledge have managed to find some sort of balance between family, work, and Army life.

My point in all of this is to tell you that you just never know what you'll end up doing. So don't give up on your journey. Don't give up on making this life work for you. Be flexible and open minded. In the words of my two favorite people Kathie Hightower and Holly Scherer, "Follow *your* dreams while you follow the military." If you would have asked me ten years ago, I would have told you I was going to have my master's degree in training and development and would be working for a Fortune 500 company in the HR department training employees on good customer service. Today--I'm not—and I wouldn't have it any other way.