REDISCOVER · RETURN · RISE

PATH 02 · FREE GUIDE

The Return Guide

Go back to work with confidence.

A practical workbook for your first 30 days back: translate your experience into job skills, talk about your gap without apologizing and find work that fits your life.

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A NOTE FROM HEATHER

Time away didn't erase what you know.

When I went back to work after my divorce, I had five children depending on me and a resume that felt like it belonged to someone else. I applied to 88 companies and didn't hear back from any of them.

If you're worried your skills are out of date, or you hear a voice saying, "I used to be able to do that, but I'm not sure I can anymore," I want you to know: that voice is a liar. A persuasive one, but a liar.

The only thing that quiets it is evidence. This guide will help you gather that evidence, tell your story with confidence and take steady steps back into work that fits your life.

How to use this guide: Work through one page at a time. Then follow the 30-day plan at the end, one week at a time.

Heather

Heather Nemelka, founder of Elavare

STEP 1

Your skills translator

Employers hire for skills, not job titles. The work you've done at home, in school volunteering and in your community counts. Translate it into the words employers use.

WHAT I DID	THE JOB SKILL IT SHOWS
Ran the school fundraiser	*Event planning, budgeting, managing volunteers*
Managed the family budget	*Budgeting, financial planning, negotiating*
Coordinated schedules for a busy family	*Project management, prioritizing, logistics*
Coached a youth team	*Leadership, coaching, team building*
Handled medical care and insurance for a family member	*Research, advocacy, problem solving*

> *Circle the three skills you most want to use in your next job. Those go at the top of your resume.*

STEP 2

Your gap, reframed

You never need to apologize for time spent caring for your family. Keep your explanation short, true and focused on what's next. Use this simple formula:

What you did
One sentence about your time away.

What you built
A skill or result from that time.

Why you're ready
What you're excited to bring now.

Example

> *"I spent the last eight years raising my children. During that time I led our school's fundraising committee and managed its budget. Now my kids are in school full time, and I'm excited to bring my organization and leadership skills to a team like yours."*

My version

Practice it out loud until it feels natural. Say it to a friend, then to the mirror. Notice how much more confident it sounds without "just" or "sorry."

STEP 3

Your job-fit checklist

The right job fits your strengths and your life. Get clear on your must-haves before you start applying, so you spend your energy on roles that work for you.

	MUST HAVE	NICE TO HAVE
Schedule (hours, flexibility)		
Location (remote, hybrid, commute)		
Pay (the range I need)		
Benefits		
Kind of work (people, ideas, numbers, hands-on)		
Kind of team or culture		

Job titles to search for

Look into returnships. Some employers offer paid programs designed for people coming back after a career break. Search “returnship” plus your field or city.

STEP 4

Your 30-day plan

One focus each week. Check things off as you go, and celebrate every box.

Week 1 · Refresh

- [ ] Update your resume with your top three skills first
- [ ] Add a current photo and headline to LinkedIn
- [ ] Write and practice your “gap” sentence

Week 2 · Reconnect

- [ ] List 10 people you know (friends, former coworkers, neighbors)
- [ ] Reach out to five of them and share what you’re looking for
- [ ] Ask one person for a 20-minute coffee chat

Week 3 · Apply

- [ ] Find five roles that fit your checklist
- [ ] Use words from each job description in your resume
- [ ] Apply, then message someone who works there

Week 4 · Prepare

- [ ] Practice your answer to “Tell me about yourself”
- [ ] Research one company like you already work there
- [ ] Write two questions to ask at the end of an interview

> *Silence after applying is common, and it says nothing about your worth. Keep going. Every step builds momentum.*

WHAT'S NEXT

Keep going. Help is here.

Once you're back at work, the **Rise Guide** will help you get seen, advocate for yourself and grow. Need to reconnect with yourself first? Start with the **Rediscover Guide**.

Small steps add up. Come back to this guide whenever you need a reminder of who you are and where you're going.

FIND YOUR PATH

Take the free 3-minute assessment to see whether Rediscover, Return or Rise fits you best.
elavare.com/start

TALK WITH HEATHER

Book a complimentary coaching call, or a 60-minute career coaching call to build your plan.
elavare.com/coaching

KEEP LEARNING

Free guides, videos, articles and AI prompts in the resource library.
elavare.com/resources

Questions? Email **info@elavare.com**. We read every message.