

# *Pink Ladders*<sup>TM</sup>

## ***Angela Newman's Story***

Written by Angela Newman

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Many women attend college directly after high school either because they wanted to or because their parents expected them to. Others like me did not attend college until later in life. I grew up in a home where college was not the norm, nor was it expected of me to attend. In fact, my parents never discussed choices in life with me regarding education or getting a job. Because it was not a part of my life or discussions with friends that we should be planning for college, I never did. Instead, I married at a young age and had three children.

Although I had worked at a few jobs through my teen years and in my parents businesses, it wasn't until my youngest was in pre-school that I started working again. I decided to pursue a career in nursing because after all, I was working as a nurse assistant so it was a natural transition. I have to say though, that I did not have enough self confidence to attend school; I just didn't feel I was smart enough. I was also very naive and confused on the whole process. I thank my sister because she walked me through the process of signing up and encouraged me to pursue a nursing degree.

Juggling school, working part time and raising three kids was, to say the least, a challenge and at times seemed impossible. But if you are determined to better yourself and in turn provide a better life for yourself and your kids, whatever the struggle is, no matter how tired you get emotionally and physically, you **must** find the strength to keep going. It will all be worth it in the end.

I continued with school until my now ex-husband was offered a job out of state and we packed up our belongings in Southern California and headed for Salt Lake City, Utah. At this time my sister and mother had already moved to SLC to get away from the crowds of Southern California so having them close by would give me some emotional support. I decided to take a year off school until I was a Utah resident and then apply for nursing school to finish my degree. I only had two semesters left and then I would be able to test for an RN license.

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In the meantime I worked the graveyard shift at a large hospital three nights a week as a nurse assistant for a couple of years before changing jobs to work as a part time Materials Coordinator. I know you're probably wondering - what is a Materials Coordinator? That's what I asked when a colleague of mine told me about the job and suggested I apply for it. It's basically ordering, receiving and stocking medical supplies needed for a healthcare facility; in this case a facility that offered many different specialties for its patients. You can learn more about my experience working there by reading, "Thank You Farley!" listed under Mentoring/Coaching in the Career section of the Pink Ladders website.

Taking a year off from school was the best thing I could have done as well as taking the job of Materials Coordinator at FHP. It was during this time off I decided nursing really wasn't my passion. It was something I knew because I had worked as a nurse assistant off and on for years and it just seemed like the logical choice. I worked as a Materials Coordinator for a few years but did not immediately return to school. I had a lot going on in my life personally and did not feel it was the right time to work and attend school. I was married to an alcoholic at the time that was not only emotionally abusive but physically as well. Just working part time while my kids were in school was all I could do because I could not count on him for any support. And of course, once home from work and raising a family, my energy both emotionally and physically was focused on me and my kids and our struggle to survive.

As things progressively became worse in our household and the abuse continued, I knew that in order for me to remove myself and my kids from this situation, I would have to be able to take care of us financially because I knew there was no way I would receive any child support from this man; he would spend all his money on drugs and alcohol. So, I started planning with my sister at her house how I could manage to a) make it financially without my ex-husband b) what career choices I could look at immediately that would require little or no school but pay enough to make ends meet and c) when I would tell him I wanted a divorce and prepare for any type of reaction and repercussion.

So while my ex-husband was at work and the kids in school, I would go to my sister's home and make phone calls and figure out a plan of action. She provided me with so much support and encouragement during these times. (Thank you Lori!) I will also add that my children and I were attending a support group on a weekly basis. This group provided emotional

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support and education on understanding the characteristics of an alcoholic, what makes them behave as they do and how to cope with the disease and live or interact with them. This group was called Alanon and the kids group was Alateen. It helped me to see what I was dealing with and once I made the decision to divorce my husband, what I learned during these meetings gave me the courage to face him and tell him I wanted a divorce and be prepared for any reaction. It was this group and the support of my sister that really helped change my life. After my divorce, I continued to work at the same job but took on additional responsibilities that allowed me to work full time.

I later remarried, this time to a wonderful man. He is the complete opposite of my ex-husband and no longer do I have to live in fear for me or my kids. He encouraged me to go back to school and finish my degree. However, realizing nursing wasn't my passion I changed my major to Business Administration and got my Bachelor's degree. That was a very proud moment for me. Here I was a woman who had very little self esteem and confidence and never felt smart enough to get a Bachelors' degree but I did it. It wasn't until I was in my late 30's but it's never too late to start going to school and begin climbing your pink ladder. At the graduation ceremony, I saw others graduating with their Master's degree and told my husband; someday I want to go back to school so I can walk across the stage wearing a Master's Hood.

When we moved to Nashville, Tennessee for his job, I continued to pursue my Master's degree and graduated in my early 40's with a MBA in Healthcare Management. Although I decided not to pursue my nursing degree, I did remain in healthcare and continue to work there today as Vice President of Supply Chain for a national dialysis provider company.

My advice to women is regardless of what your current situation is and regardless of whether you have any previous education; it is never too late to seek higher education and focus on climbing your pink ladder. If you think you're not smart enough, don't have the resources to go to school or the emotional support, I'm here to tell you if you have the will there is always a way. It may not be the ideal or the easiest, but there is a way. You just have to research your options and talk to people and organizations that can assist you in getting started down your career path.

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Anyone reading this story is smart enough to go to school and achieve their career goals even if you have not yet done so. There were times when I would struggle with classes and projects and wondered if I was smart enough to actually get my degree and when those thoughts popped into my head, I told myself, "Of course I am. Look at the thousands if not millions of women who have done it before me and will do it after me. If they can do it, so can I." And so can you!