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Having interesting and meaningful work makes life so much better.

My father required that all three of his daughters go into male-dominated professions. Having survived World War II, he believed life could be very uncertain and that it was vitally important for each of us to be able to support ourselves. I was supposed to be an accountant but found the classes horribly dull and could not imagine doing the work for decades to come. Fortunately, I became hooked on finance after my first class on money and banking.

My goal coming out of college was to get a job in investments. I was fortunate to find a job in the trust department of a bank where I worked my way up from an assistant to a portfolio management position. I learned a lot but decided to move to investment consulting as I was completing my MBA. I discovered that I liked focusing on portfolio construction and manager selection a great deal more than picking individual stocks or bonds. Along the way, I earned my CFA. The consulting industry was still young when I started and therefore I wore many hats. That enabled me to deepen my investment knowledge through capital markets and manager research work while also honing my consulting skills. As the firm grew larger and specialization became increasingly important, I chose to focus on the CIO role. In my first job out of college, I was fortunate to

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have several mentors (all men) who were smart, investment savvy, and hardworking individuals. They took an interest in my career and their guidance helped me advance from an entry-level portfolio assistant position to a full-fledged portfolio manager. At the time, there was only one other female portfolio manager, and the CIO cautioned that I may encounter some challenges being female. In reality, being young proved to be a bigger challenge, as the investment industry is one of the few fields where being older is an advantage. As I moved to the consulting field, I had two key mentors, one male and one female. Knowing that someone has your back is immensely empowering. They also taught me an important lesson - if you don't like the rules, figure out a way to change them.

Looking back, the most challenging times were when I was working full time and going to school for my MBA, and later when I was working full time and raising young children. The big trade-off is social time with friends. There just isn't enough time to do it all, so family and work are prioritized. Along the way, there were times when I questioned my sanity, commitment and whether it was all worthwhile. It is. The kids grow up and leave home. Having interesting and meaningful work makes life so much better.

If I could give some advice to my younger self, I would tell me to stress less about the political BS that happens in all companies. Most of it works itself out. But if it doesn't align with your core values, leave. Never stop learning.

The investment business has become increasingly inclusive - both by gender and race. There are women in leadership roles across consulting and asset management. I also see more women in direct investment roles - stock and bond research and portfolio management. It's still a bit uneven, however. Some firms have done a great job while others seem oblivious. Heightened awareness helps, but we need to encourage women to enter the investment business and not self-select out because of the demands of an investment career. We should encourage smart, talented and hard-working young people to enter the investments business regardless of their gender or race. In addition, it's important to provide these young folks with support, mentoring and training so that they can be successful.

