

# HOBBY TO HUSTLE

A hobby can BOOST your mental health, relationships and job prospects. But, who has the TIME? We speak to mothers who rediscovered a PASSION – and uncovered a NEW career path.

WORDS // Amy Molloy

## MOVING FORWARD

**As a former ballerina, Lizzy Williamson turned to exercise to heal from postnatal depression – and realised small things make a huge difference.**

“I was a professional ballerina for many years and, before I had children, I would do dance classes, boxing and kickboxing. After having my first baby Stella, now 11, I could catch up on some sleep when she slept, so I still had some energy to exercise. It was baby two – my daughter Ruby – that was the killer.

She hardly slept so to coordinate naps was impossible. I didn't have a spare hour, I wasn't earning any money and I had totally lost my motivation. The whole exercise thing felt way too hard, so I stopped doing anything.

You would think the fact I would repeat the words, 'I'm going to kill myself', over and over would have been a big warning sign, but I didn't even question it. You would also think that holding my beautiful baby next to the upstairs window, thinking about throwing her out, would also be a sign that something was seriously wrong.

When I finally saw my doctor, she told me I was experiencing postnatal depression. After explaining my treatment options she said, 'You know how when you get on the plane and they tell you to put on your oxygen mask first before assisting others? That's what you have to do'.

Although it was the last thing I felt like doing, I became determined to find my oxygen mask – and movement seemed like the obvious answer. The next day, I put Playschool on the television and decided to try and do a 20-minute workout, whilst my older daughter was distracted, using the kitchen bench as a ballet barre.

When my baby started crying after a couple of minutes, my first instinct was to think this workout thing wasn't going to work. However, later I realised even that was an amazing achievement, and the most I'd done for myself in months.

From then on, whenever I heard about friends that were not in a good mental state, I'd film a two minute workout and send it to them. I had previously taught workout classes, so I had some experience. I started sharing them publicly on social media – and the Two Minute Movement was born.

Since then, it's grown into an online business, a book, speaking gigs and TV opportunities, globally. An American magazine dubbed me 'the Excuse Buster from Down Under', and *Good Morning America* asked to feature my 'Core on the Couch' workout on the show.

The best part is sharing all this with my daughters – both the highs and the lows. I'll never forget running up to the school gates to tell them I'd signed a book deal. When I was writing and suffering from a confidence crisis, they would give me cuddles.

My youngest daughter is now ten and I still get worried about spiralling into depression so I practice what I preach. Every day, no matter what, I move my body, even if it's 20 push-ups in the kitchen.

My life is busier than ever, as I have just launched a Two Minute Moves subscriber program which includes coaching calls, check-ins and an online TV channel. I used to get resentful when 3pm rolled around and I had to do school pick up, but I now realise mamahood has given me the gift of a work-life balance.

Anything you can do for yourself is worth it, as I discovered in my kitchen that day. Just keep taking one small step after the other.”

[TWO MINUTE MOVES.COM](http://TWO MINUTE MOVES.COM)



Lizzie has used her skills and discipline as a dancer to create a business that aims to help other mamas.



**“I AM STRONGER AND HEALTHIER THAN EVER. I WANT TO SHOW PEOPLE WHAT IS POSSIBLE.”**



Brydie was devastated when she was diagnosed with MS. But she found a hobby that helped her through.

## FIBRES OF LIFE

**After a worrying diagnosis, Brydie Stewart found courage in creativity – and crafts a life she loves.**

“It was Valentine's day 2013, one week before my wedding day, when I was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis at the age of 29. I remember sobbing to my future husband Joel that I just didn't want to be sick and, to be honest, I didn't have time to be sick.

As a visual arts teacher I was extremely overworked and overwhelmed. Plus, in the next stage of my life, I wanted to start a family which I knew would only add to my commitments.

As part of my treatment, I was told to reduce my stress levels. I'd always practiced yoga but whenever I tried meditating I always ended each session with a sense of failure. The answer didn't arrive until I was on maternity leave with my first daughter Lola, when I discovered macramé.

Perhaps it was my maternal instinct kicking in, but I was instantly drawn to the tactile nature of fibre arts – the warmth and soul it takes to create each piece before it

reaches its final resting place. I knew this practice would fill my world.

From the beginning I practiced daily, loving the sense of escapism I felt when knotting. I could be working on a piece for hours at a time, long after my baby went to bed, and it felt like only mere moments had passed.

I took great joy from my new hobby, but never imagined it would lead to a full time job. I will never forget taking on my first buyer, who'd spotted my work on Instagram. As a maker, self-doubt can be overpowering but, thankfully, she loved the piece. Through social media and word-of-mouth recommendations, orders began flowing in. However, it wasn't until I began hosting workshops in my hometown of Kiama in NSW – and they all sold out – that I began to think I might not have to return to teaching.

A big step for my business then came when I started developing my own line of coloured fibre, which was my daughter's idea. Sweetly, Lola requested that I create a pink piece for her bedroom. When I told her the coloured fibre she wanted didn't exist she asked, 'Why not?' I spent months sourcing fibre, creating prototypes and

selecting pantones from manufacturers who didn't understand why I'd want anything but a raw product. When I launched a range of coloured Turkish cotton it sold out within hours and, the next run, within minutes.

As my maternity leave came to an end, handing in my notice as a teacher wasn't a safe route, but the risk drove me further to be successful. After all, 'Creativity takes courage' is the mantra I have advocated to thousands of students during my career.

In 2017, my second daughter Ivory was born. With a four-year-old and 21-month-old, I work in the (very!) early morning before they wake up. Lola doesn't think I work – she thinks I 'play' with cotton, which is true in many ways.

My husband and I are building a new house which includes an art studio, not just to inspire my own creativity but also for our daughters and my students. I don't allow creative self-doubt to enter my mind these days, and I hope it stays far from my girls. Even though macramé is now my business, it still relaxes me and I feel most at peace when I'm knotting.

As for my illness, I am stronger and healthier than ever, and want to show people what is possible. As a wife, mama and business owner, my life may look like a whirlwind but it's filled with things that bring me joy. That is how I have found my way back to myself.”

[MARYMAKERSTUDIO.COM.AU](http://MARYMAKERSTUDIO.COM.AU)

## MAMA SOUL

### IN THE MIND

With a sleepless baby, Eugenie Pepper turned to meditation. It inspired her next business idea.

"I was in high school when I tried meditating for the first time, and it didn't click with me initially. To combat exam stress, a friend and I joined a meditation class, but I found it so difficult that I gave up before I felt any real benefits.

I couldn't clear my mind of thoughts, so I had the mistaken belief that I couldn't meditate. It was a while before I tried again, this time with guided meditations I could listen to at home.

However, it wasn't until the birth of my son, Tommy, who is now 10 years old, that I began to rely on meditation as a daily practice that I couldn't live without. As a newborn Tommy had reflux and was one of those babies who constantly cried and never slept. As a result, I was tired and wired.

Desperate for relaxation, I started doing guided meditation in the evenings. It became my nightly 'time-out' routine after my husband came home from work. This time I had a better understanding of meditation, and realised there isn't a 'right' or 'wrong' way. You can meditate when you're walking in the park with a pram, by paying attention to the sounds of nature. Or, you can meditate lying in bed.

I had always been a bit of a worrier and had suffered from anxiety in the past. This

Genie has turned her love of meditation into her next business venture without looking back.



helped me to disconnect from unproductive thoughts, so I could reconnect to what was real and important – my family and my sense of self.

By the time my daughter Chloe was born nine years ago, I felt more confident as a mother and could take on more work. I had already set up two businesses when I was 25 years old – an interior design company and an art gallery. I was also the co-owner of the childrenswear brand, Plum Australia. However, I'd always had a strong interest in psychology and what makes people tick. I studied counselling before launching Plum, but didn't pursue it further.

Almost two years ago, my friend Rosemary and I were on holiday in Bali – our first vacation since having children – when we began talking about meditation, and how parents could benefit from it. We decided to develop an app for mums that made meditation quick and easy – and 'Key for Me' was born.

Today, the app includes programs to calm you, de-stress you or send you to sleep. As I've suffered from anxiety and overwhelm, I'm a great tester. During the day, I listen to short meditations such as 'Uplift'. In the evenings, I love the 'Cocoon of Silence' which is nurturing and soothing.

Now my children are older, I have more time to meditate. I also guide my children through a meditation before bedtime. I incorporate things that interest them, such as dance or football, into a relaxing story.

If I could revisit myself in high school – the girl who didn't 'click' with meditation – I would tell her to stop worrying. You don't need to clear your thoughts. Don't expect to be perfect in the beginning. Have patience and, more importantly practice, and the benefits will be worth it."

KEYMINDFULNESS.COM

### PERFECT POSE

During pregnancy, yoga teacher Sarah-Jane Perman turned her back on her mat. Two years later, she found the perfect balance.

"When I was pregnant with my son Sammy, everyone kept saying to me, 'Oh, it must be so great doing yoga through your pregnancy.' I'd been a full-time yoga teacher for years, ever since I quit my corporate job in 2012. However, as the weeks went by, yoga felt counter-intuitive to me. I have a hyper-mobile body and I didn't want to risk injury to myself or my baby. So, after my first trimester, I stopped – or a least my yoga practice changed shape.

There are some hilarious Instagram videos of me dancing at 41 weeks pregnant – a lot of big, swirly movements. However, the yoga flow I'd always loved – dynamic poses and handstands – were no longer what my body craved.

After giving birth, I decided to practice the tradition of 'confinement' – where you don't leave the house for 40 days. It seemed even more essential after a traumatic emergency caesarean.

For weeks, I didn't see anybody but my husband, baby, mother, doula and midwife. For someone who loves movement and freedom, it felt surprisingly easy.

Weeks later, when I attempted my first dynamic yoga flow, I inflamed a disc in my back and found myself in the most excruciating pain. The lesson? I needed to slow down and acknowledge that my body – my instrument – was a little different now. I needed to surrender.



## HOW TO TURN YOUR HOBBY INTO A HUSTLE

Michelle Gibbings, author of *Career Leap*, shares her tips.

### BE REALISTIC

Not all hobbies are potential sources of income, so assess if there is a market as early as possible. Talk to people and test your concept – are they willing to part with money for your product or service?

### GET PRACTICAL

Set yourself clear milestones around what you want to achieve, and by when. This includes considering how much money you are willing to invest, whether you need to save or can access 'seed capital' through a startup loan or grant.

### BEWARE OF OVERLOAD

If you're planning to hold down a full-time job whilst side-hustling, consider how long you can sustain a 'dual track' approach.

At what point might you consider quitting your day job?

### DON'T USE WHAT ISN'T YOURS

Ensure all work that relates to your gig is yours. Invest in equipment and technology. Also, read your employment contract carefully. It may include an intellectual property clause, which means anything you create while working for a company belongs to them.

### 'FESS UP IF A CONFLICT

Whether or not you tell your boss depends on the type of relationship you have. If there's any potential for a conflict of interest – even in a small way – then be very respectful and open. Hopefully, they're excited for your new avenue.

SARAHJANEPERMAN.COM

