

# TIME CAPSULE

*Hero is a national journalist with over 25 years' experience, being named one of the UK's 50 most influential women in 2019 by the Daily Mail. She was Editor of the Independent on Sunday magazine, Deputy Editor of Red magazine and a freelance features writer for Elle, Marie Claire, The Telegraph and The Times. Muddy Stilettos now has 225,000 subscribers to the newsletter and 300 visitors a month to the website!*


## Dear future me!

Well hello! I'm writing to you from the middle of the COVID crisis in 2020 from my home in leafy Buckinghamshire (I remember geography was never your strong suit - head 50 miles to the north west of London and you'll find me!).

Millions of people have lost their jobs during this pandemic, but I'm one of the lucky ones who are still working – in fact I am working now. You remember writing those 'novels' in primary school and thinking one day you'd be a writer? Well look, it's happened!

I own a big website called Muddy Stilettos, and my job title is 'editor-in-chief', which may sound a bit posh, but what it means is that I manage lots of journalists around the country and make sure that they are writing interesting, helpful and amusing articles for Muddy Stilettos readers to enjoy. Usually that means telling readers about the best things to do where they live – trying out local restaurants and hotels, reviewing play, visiting new shops – but that has all had to change. When lockdown happened my whole business went into lockdown too, because all the pubs, shops, bars and hotels I would write about shut down, and no-one could visit them.

I was very worried at first because I thought that if I wasn't writing about these things, maybe no one would want to visit my website anymore. We had to think hard about how people were feeling – their fears and pleasures and what they would want to read when they couldn't leave their houses, or have friends over for dinner, or hug their mum and dad, or go to school and learn, or visit the cinema with mates and eat popcorn.




We are lucky as a website, because unlike paper magazines, we know exactly which features are the ones most read because the individual computer ‘clicks’ on each feature, telling us this information.

So, what *did* people want to read about? They wanted me to tell them the best local walks to go on with their families; how to grow a vegetable patch or pretty summer flowers; how to help their children stay motivated to learn with virtual schooling. They wanted recipes for home cooking, scenic bike rides and advice on how to cut hair at home (do you remember how mum once cut your fringe and it accidentally went diagonal? I did that to my own daughter during lockdown!).


In short, they wanted to know about simple pleasures and they still do – many people prefer this more pared back life to the spinning hamster wheel of life before COVID. Family, friends, health and nature have become priorities, over work, wealth and the culture of ‘busy-ness’.

In this new world, the way I work has changed a lot. Instead of my snazzy glass and brick office, I am currently working from the same little desk in my living room where I had started my business nearly 10 years ago. Often at the end of the day my kids watch Pokémon on TV in the same room but I don’t mind, I just ‘zone out’ (it’s a mum skill, you’ll get it one day!) and get on with writing.



Actually, I like being in the room with my children, it’s one of the good things to come out of lockdown. Before COVID I’d be out to work first thing at 8am and not home until 6pm. Now we take family walks, we eat lunch together, we dip outside to play a bit of cricket in the garden if we need a bit of fresh air or a break from work. Life is slower, less exciting in some ways, but also more manageable and relaxed. I don’t miss how frenetic my life was before.

So for me, working from home for the foreseeable is a good thing, and I’m lucky as a digital business that everything we do is via computer – written, uploaded, and read online. The only difficulty I’ve had is with having to have so many Zoom video meetings. The technology was a bit tricky to begin with but’s not my main problem – it’s been my groggy 17-year-old son, late up for school, walking past me wearing only his



underwear while I'm on a call. Luckily the people I work with have a sense of humour because, frankly, it's not a pretty sight.



As lockdown eases, I think some people will all go back to their old ways, and it will be my job to react to that too and write what my readers interested in. But I hope we've all learnt something about taking time out, breathing fresh air and appreciating family above work during this time.

I know, I know - you want to grow up quick and get a job and live in London and buy a mansion in Notting Hill (tip: you *might* want to look at a less expensive postcode) but trust me – you can relax on the job front, you'll be just fine. But those moments you spend doodling, writing your diary or walking round the garden as dad shows you his flower borders? Hold onto them, they're more precious than anything.

From,  
Hero

