



## Personal backbone

**by a learning and development manager**

My experience of the personal backbone was one of the most humbling and meaningful experiences in my life. It was the first time that I had ever focused on thinking about myself and my life story and it really took me on an emotional journey. Through this process, it became clear to me who had helped shape my strong religious, family, moral and ethical values, my drive and my determination. I remember just sitting there after this exercise and visualizing how each person had contributed to who I am today.

At that moment I paused and said a little prayer thanking each of them for their important contributions to my life. I had never done that before and it really felt good. This gave me a great insight into my purpose, which I believe is: 'To help people reach their full potential through learning and the application of that learning.'

As a result, I began thinking about where I wanted to go in my career. I realized that in about five years I would be reaching a crossroads in my life, transitioning from full-time work to retirement. I had really never thought about that much, so this really helped me focus on the future.

At that point I realized my ambition would need to encompass both my remaining professional years and my retirement. I thought, 'This is great, having my life plan ahead of me.' I was really on a rollercoaster high and then it hit me: 'How in the world am I going to do all of this?' Then my rollercoaster was headed straight down and it almost took my breath away. 'Where do I start? So much to do! Do I have enough time? Can I do it?'

That was when my personal drive and determination took over. I would not accept that it couldn't be done. I began identifying the initiatives and pathways that would help me move forward, and that gave me the confidence needed to change the direction of the rollercoaster.

The personal backbone exercise really helped me make meaning of my past, present and future. And my beliefs and values are now very closely mirrored in my work.

