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When I walked into the first session of The PhD Project conference, I was floored. I thought, "They are talking to *me*."

They were talking about when you have exhausted corporate life, and want to maximize what you've done, and you're at a crossroads and are needing flexibility. It was an epiphany. I called my husband and said, "This is what we are doing next."

Getting a Ph.D. had been on my dream list but I didn't know how to get one, and I didn't know anyone who had one. I didn't have any idea; it was on a back burner. I had a toddler, so while raising a small child at home, I was thinking about what I would do next. I Googled something about a Ph.D.; I thought it was a suped-up MBA.

I happened upon The PhD Project website. I saw the picture of the huge audience, and all those speakers. It all just clicked. I like opportunities where people say, "Could you help us? We need people like you."

I went to the 2003 conference. I left my husband and little one in southern California to fly to cold Chicago. It was icy; it was cold. It was also life-altering.

Getting the Ph.D. was much more difficult than I ever dreamed. It was stressful – and stretching. The Doctoral Students Association was the only way I survived. You think, "Maybe I can't do this," but then you come to the DSA sessions and you say, "Oh yes, I can!"

In my research, I try to understand consumption – when is it bad, when do people spend too much and engage in risky behavior. My hope is to help consumers get out of bad consumption habits, mitigate the problems of it.