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Work & Family Mailbox

Sue Shellenbarger answers readers' questions

By **SUE SHELLNBARGER**

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Q: *I've been a senior manager for 25 years for technology companies in the U.S. and internationally, but never got a bachelor's degree. Do you know of any universities that offer online M.B.A.s for people like me?*

—D.L., Freeport, Bahamas

A: There are two potential routes to attaining your M.B.A., says Vicky Phillips, chief education analyst at GetEducated.com, Essex Junction, Vt., an online-degree clearinghouse. U.S. accredited colleges generally won't accept you into an M.B.A. program without a bachelor's degree, she says. However, four accredited U.S. "assessment colleges" give bachelor's degrees to people who can prove their career experience warrants one, she says: Thomas Edison State College, Trenton, N.J.; Excelsior College, Albany, N.Y.; Charter Oak State College, New Britain, Conn.; and Western Governors University, Salt Lake City.

Each requires you to build an extensive "academic portfolio" including documentation of knowledge, verified work experience and certifications. Then a faculty committee reviews it and decides what course credits should be awarded and whether a degree is warranted, Ms. Phillips says.

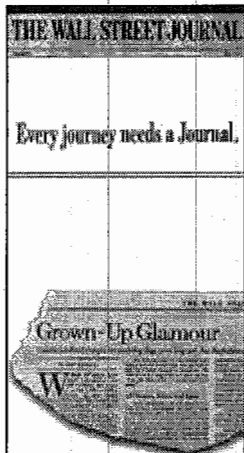
In another route, some people study online with a college in the United Kingdom, where admission to M.B.A. programs doesn't necessarily require a bachelor's degree, she says. Two examples are Henley Management College, Oxfordshire, England, and Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh, Scotland. However, these colleges impose very rigorous exams and formal academic standards to test a candidate's competency; students who lack much formal academic training often have difficulty, she adds.

Q: *Re your coverage of supports for working caregivers to the elderly: Is the "Powerful Tools for Caregivers" course available to the public?*

—B.S., Salem, N.H.

A: The program is being expanded to the public nationwide, says Kathy Shannon, manager, caregiver services, for Legacy Health Systems, the Portland, Ore., company that developed the program. People in 23 states have been trained to teach the course, which covers relaxation, caregiving skills, self-care, and help dealing with doctors and family. Legacy also is negotiating to offer it through cooperative extension services, which are federally supported research-and-education agencies at some state universities across the country. For more information, email Legacy at caregiver@lhs.org.

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Other contacts: Your state office of AARP, the advocacy group, may know of caregiver-support programs; go to www.aarp.org, scroll down and click on "AARP in your state." Also, your government-supported area aging agency, findable at www.eldercare.gov, acts as a clearinghouse for information on such issues.

Q: *Your article on fathers' role in children's development was particularly interesting because I spend most of my time away from my 3-year-old daughter. My wife's job has taken her to a different city, and I commute to see them on weekends. I worry about spending so much time away from our daughter.*

A: Try not to worry too much about the time away; focus instead on what happens when you're with her, advises Kyle Pruett, an author of "Fatherhood" and a clinical professor of psychiatry at Yale University. "For modern parents, that means turn off your cellphone, stop multitasking, pay attention to your child and be with her in the moment," he says. Kids are extraordinarily responsive to a parent's undivided attention. Allow a little transition time each time you arrive, to allow her to get used to your presence. Then, "really tune in to whether your child wants to play, to cuddle, or to take on a new adventure," Dr. Pruett says.

Also, show her you're thinking of her when you're apart. Remember the name of her best friend or favorite stuffed animal. Ask her to send with you something to take care of for her, such as a toy, then bring it back the next weekend, Dr. Pruett advises. And of course, use the phone or other technology to communicate during the week, such as online photos or videoconferencing.

• Email sue.shellenbarger@wsj.com.

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