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# Mothers Looking Ahead

## Module 3: Overcoming Barriers to Continue Your Education



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## Module Aim

The aim of this module is to empower mothers with the knowledge and skills necessary to recognize the importance of education in their lives, identify and overcome personal barriers to pursuing further education, navigate available educational opportunities, and set and achieve realistic educational goals. By addressing these key areas, participants will be better equipped to take proactive steps toward their educational aspirations and personal development.





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## Learning Outcomes

### 1. Knowledge:

**Understanding of Educational Importance:**

Recognize the critical role education plays in personal and professional development, including its long-term benefits for career advancement and personal fulfillment.

**Awareness of Barriers:** Identify common personal barriers to education, such as time constraints, financial issues, and self-doubt, as well as societal barriers that may affect their educational journey.

**Knowledge of Educational Opportunities:**

Explore various educational pathways, including traditional and non-traditional options, resources available for adult learners, and support systems that can aid in their educational pursuits.

**Goal-Setting Framework:** Understand the principles of setting SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) goals and how they can be applied to educational objectives.

### 2. Skills:

**Self-Assessment and Reflection:**

Develop the ability to conduct personal assessments to identify strengths, weaknesses, and barriers in relation to educational aspirations.

**Resource Navigation:** Acquire skills to effectively research and evaluate educational opportunities, including how to access scholarships, grants, online courses, and community resources.

**Goal-Setting and Planning:** Create a detailed action plan for achieving educational goals, including timelines, milestones, and strategies for monitoring progress.

**Problem-Solving:** Enhance problem-solving skills to address barriers and challenges that may arise during the pursuit of educational goals.

### 3. Attitudes:

**Growth Mindset:** Foster a positive attitude toward learning and personal development, embracing challenges as opportunities for growth and improvement.

**Resilience:** Develop resilience and perseverance in the face of setbacks or obstacles, understanding that overcoming challenges is a key part of the educational journey.

**Empowerment:** Cultivate a sense of empowerment, recognizing that education is within reach and that participants have the agency to shape their futures.

**Community Orientation:** Instill a sense of community and support among peers, encouraging participants to seek help and collaborate with others in their educational pursuits.



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## Motivating Case Story

### Malika from the Netherlands

Malika, a single mother living in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, dreamed of pursuing higher education to provide a better life for herself and her children. Originally from Morocco, she moved to the Netherlands in her early 20s. Without formal qualifications, Malika worked in low-paying jobs while raising her children on her own after her husband left.

Despite her circumstances, she knew education was the key to breaking the cycle of poverty. The main barriers Malika faced were time management, financial constraints, and language barriers. However, her resilience and support from local community organizations helped her navigate these obstacles.





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## Motivating Case Story

### Steps Malika took to overcome barriers:

- ✓ **Language Courses:** Malika first enrolled in Dutch language courses, offered free by the local municipality, which helped her integrate better into Dutch society and increased her confidence.
- ✓ **Flexible Education Programs :** Malika found an open university that offered part-time and online courses, allowing her to study around her work and parenting responsibilities.
- ✓ **Financial Aid:** She applied for government grants and financial support available for single mothers and adult learners, which eased her financial burden and allowed her to focus on her studies.
- ✓ **Support Networks:** Malika joined a group of single mothers in her community who also sought to pursue education. They met regularly to discuss their challenges and share resources, which provided her with motivation and emotional support.



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## Motivating Case Story

### ➤ Outcome:

After years of hard work, Malika earned her degree in Social Work. This not only improved her employment prospects but also gave her the confidence to become a role model for her children. She now works as a counselor helping other immigrant women integration into Dutch society, particularly focusing on education and empowerment for single mothers.

### ➤ Lessons Learned:

Perseverance and the support of community programs were key to Malika's success. Flexible learning opportunities and financial assistance are critical for single mothers looking to return to education.





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## List of Topics - Overcoming Barriers to Continue Your Education

### Recognising the importance of education

Recognizing the importance of education is vital for personal and professional development. Education not only broadens knowledge but also fosters critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and adaptability. It empowers individuals to pursue better job opportunities, enhance their financial stability, and contribute meaningfully to society. Moreover, education nurtures self-confidence and opens doors to lifelong learning, helping people adapt to changing environments and technological advancements. For mothers, continuing education offers the chance to improve both personal well-being and the future prospects of their families.

### Identifying personal barriers

Identifying personal barriers is crucial for mothers aiming to achieve their goals, whether in education, career, or personal development. Common barriers may include time constraints due to childcare responsibilities, lack of financial resources, and feelings of guilt or inadequacy when prioritizing personal needs. Emotional factors, such as self-doubt or fear of failure, can also hinder progress. To overcome these obstacles, mothers can benefit from self-reflection and setting realistic, achievable goals. Seeking support from family, friends, or professional networks can provide encouragement and accountability. By acknowledging and addressing these barriers, mothers can empower themselves to pursue their ambitions with confidence and resilience.

### Navigating educational opportunities

Navigating educational opportunities can be a rewarding yet challenging journey for mothers. Balancing family responsibilities with personal growth requires careful planning and support. Many institutions offer flexible learning options, such as online courses and part-time programs, allowing mothers to pursue their educational goals without sacrificing time with their children. Additionally, community colleges and local organizations often provide resources, scholarships, and childcare services to assist mothers in their educational pursuits. Networking with other mothers and joining support groups can also enhance motivation and provide valuable insights. Embracing these opportunities can lead to personal fulfillment and improved career prospects.

### Setting and achieving educational goals

Setting and achieving educational goals is a vital process for mothers seeking personal and professional growth. To begin, it's important to define clear, measurable goals that align with personal interests and family responsibilities. Breaking larger objectives into smaller, manageable steps can make the journey less overwhelming. Creating a schedule that balances study time with family activities helps maintain focus and accountability. Utilizing resources such as online courses, local workshops, and study groups can enhance learning while providing valuable support. Additionally, celebrating small successes along the way fosters motivation and confidence. By prioritizing education, mothers not only invest in their future but also set a powerful example for their children about the importance of lifelong learning.



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## Activity 1

### "Path to personal growth: Self-assessment and Goal setting"

- The **aim of this activity** is to encourage self-reflection, allowing you to better understand the obstacles that may be hindering your educational progress and to explore how education can contribute to your personal and professional growth. By the end of the activity, you will have a clearer idea of the steps you can take to overcome barriers and set achievable educational goals.

- **Activity Instructions:**

#### 1. Reflect on the Importance of Education for Your Growth:

- Write a brief paragraph answering the following questions:
- ✓ How do you believe continuing your education will benefit your personal and professional life?
- ✓ What skills or knowledge would you like to gain through education?





## Activity 1

### 2. Identify Your Personal Barriers:

- ✓ Create a list of any challenges you currently face that might prevent you from pursuing further education. These could include time, finances, family commitments, self-confidence, or other personal circumstances.
- ✓ For each barrier, briefly describe how it affects your ability to continue your education.

### 3. Explore Educational Opportunities:

- ✓ List three possible educational opportunities (courses, certifications, degrees, workshops) that interest you and are realistically attainable considering your current circumstances.
- ✓ For each opportunity, note down how it fits into your lifestyle and how it supports your long-term goals.

### 4. Set Realistic Educational Goals:

- ✓ Based on the above reflections, write down two short-term educational goals (within the next 6 months to 1 year) and two long-term goals (over the next 2 to 5 years).
- ✓ For each goal, describe a specific action plan outlining what you need to do to achieve it, including any resources or support systems you'll need.



## Activity 1

### 5. Self-Reflection:

- ✓ After completing the self-assessment, take a moment to reflect on the insights gained.
- ✓ What small steps can you take right now to start overcoming your barriers and working toward your goals?



This activity encourages deep reflection and will help you gain clarity on how to navigate your educational journey while overcoming personal challenges.



The activity should take approximately 1 hours.



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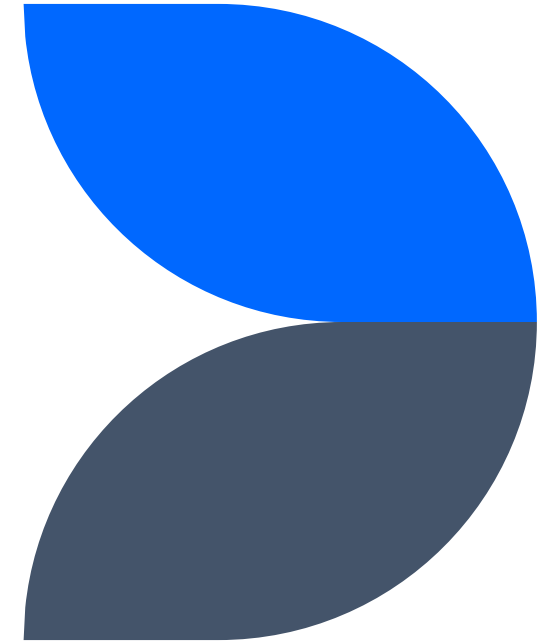
## Activity 2

### "Overcoming Barriers: Identifying Challenges to Education"

- The **aim of this activity** is to help learners become more aware of the challenges they face when pursuing education and to empower them to create actionable solutions to overcome these barriers.

- **Activity instructions:**

This 1-hour activity helps learners identify and reflect on personal barriers that may prevent them from continuing their education. It combines brainstorming, storytelling, case studies, and reflection to provide a comprehensive understanding of these barriers and how to overcome them. Learners can complete the activity with step-by-step guidance or through an online interactive version, which may include videos, articles, or case studies.





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## Activity 2

### Step 1: Brainstorming Personal Barriers (10 minutes)

**Activity:** Start by watching the following short video on common barriers to education:

**Video:** Breaking Barriers to Education <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KpJwOzp0RSA>

**Brainstorming Task:** After watching the video, take 5 minutes to brainstorm the personal barriers that are holding you back from continuing education. Think about barriers such as:

- Lack of time
- Financial difficulties
- Family responsibilities
- Limited confidence or self-doubt
- Lack of support system

➤ Write down at least 3 personal barriers and for each one, briefly describe why you see it as a challenge in your educational journey.



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## Activity 2

### Step 2: Storytelling – My Personal Barrier (10 minutes)

**Activity:** Watch this personal story of a woman overcoming barriers to education

**Video:** How I Balance My Career and Being a Mom <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kkMbNceHHxA>

#### Storytelling Task:

Take 5 minutes to reflect on your own life. Write a short personal story (a few sentences) about one key barrier you've faced or are currently facing. Consider the following prompts:

- What is the barrier, and how does it affect your education or career goals?
- How does this barrier make you feel?
- What would overcoming this barrier mean for you and your family?



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## Activity 2

### Step 3: Case Study – Learning from Others (10 minutes)

**Activity:** Read the case study below about an individual who overcame significant barriers to education

**Case Study:** <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10834-017-9535-6>

#### Task:

After reading the case study, take 5 minutes to reflect on how your challenges compare to the person in the case study. Write a short paragraph answering:

- What similarities do you see between your experience and the case study?
- What strategies did they use to overcome their barriers, and which of these might work for you?





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## Activity 2

### Step 4: Reflection Exercise – Identifying Solutions (15 minutes)

**Reflection Task:** Now that you have explored your own barriers and seen examples of others overcoming challenges, it's time to think about solutions. Reflect on your brainstormed barriers from Step 1 and take the next 10 minutes to come up with solutions or strategies for each barrier. Consider questions like:

- How can you make more time for your education?
- Are there financial resources, scholarships, or grants that you could explore?
- Can you enlist support from family or friends?

➤ For each barrier, write down 1-2 practical steps you can take to start addressing it.



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## Activity 2

### Step 5: Creating an Action Plan (15 minutes)

**Activity:** Based on your reflections, create a small action plan to help you overcome your barriers. Use the following structure to write your plan.

#### **Barrier #1: (e.g., Lack of time)**

**Solution:** Allocate 2 hours on weekends for studying and ask a family member to help with childcare.

**Resources Needed:** Study schedule, family support.

#### **Barrier #2: (e.g., Financial challenges)**

**Solution:** Research local or online scholarships for mothers returning to education.

**Resources Needed:** Time to research, financial aid applications.

**Task:** Write down two to three barriers, along with your solutions and resources needed to overcome each one. This action plan will serve as a road map for taking concrete steps toward overcoming the barriers in your educational journey.



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## Activity 2

### Completion Reflection (5 minutes)

At the end of the activity, take a few minutes to reflect on what you've learned and how you can start applying these solutions in your life. Consider:

- What is the first small step you can take toward your educational goals?
- How can you stay motivated and committed to overcoming these barriers?

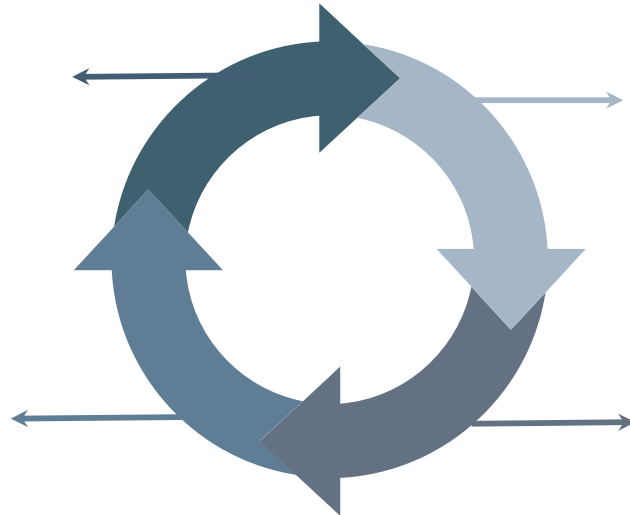
## Top Tips

### Tip 1: Prioritize Time Management

Set aside dedicated time for your studies by creating a schedule that balances family, work, and education. Use small time blocks, like early mornings or weekends, to stay consistent without overwhelming yourself.

### Tip 2: Seek Financial Support

Look for scholarships, grants, or flexible payment plans offered by educational institutions. Many programs specifically support mothers and working adults returning to education.



### Tip 3: Build a Support Network

Reach out to family, friends, or community groups for emotional and practical support, whether it's help with childcare or just someone to encourage you. Join online forums or local groups for learners in similar situations.

### Tip 4: Set Realistic, Achievable Goals

Break down your long-term educational goals into smaller, manageable steps. Celebrate each small win, whether it's completing a course or enrolling in a class, to stay motivated and track progress.



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## Additional Resources



### Khan Academy

Offers free courses in various subjects like math, science, economics, and arts. Great for self-paced learning for mothers looking to continue their education without financial constraints.

<https://www.khanacademy.org/>



### Coursera

Offers a wide range of courses from top universities and organizations. Mothers can enroll in courses or full programs, including degrees and certificates, which can be done at flexible hours.

<https://www.coursera.org/>



### edX

Provides free and paid courses from universities like Harvard and MIT. It's useful for mothers who want to advance their education with high-quality courses, often at their own pace.

<https://www.edx.org/>



### Udemy

Offers thousands of online courses in a wide range of subjects, often at discounted rates. It's ideal for mothers seeking to upskill or learn new subjects in a flexible and affordable way.

<https://www.udemy.com/>



### The Mom Hour

This podcast is a great resource for mothers who are trying to manage both parenting and personal goals like education. It features discussions about family life and practical tips for balancing everything.

<https://themomhour.com/>



### The Smart Passive Income Podcast

Hosted by Pat Flynn, this podcast is useful for mothers interested in learning how to start a side business or create passive income streams to support their education or family needs.

<https://www.smartpassiveincome.com/spi/>



### Beyond the To-Do List

Focused on productivity strategies and work-life balance, this podcast helps mothers find practical ways to manage their education, parenting, and personal development.

<https://www.beyondthetodolist.com/>



### Her Money

Hosted by financial expert Jean Chatzky, this podcast covers personal finance, money management, and economic empowerment for women. It's particularly useful for mothers managing family budgets while investing in their education.

<https://hermoney.com/>



# Ready to test your knowledge?

It's time to put your skills to the test...

[START NOW](#)



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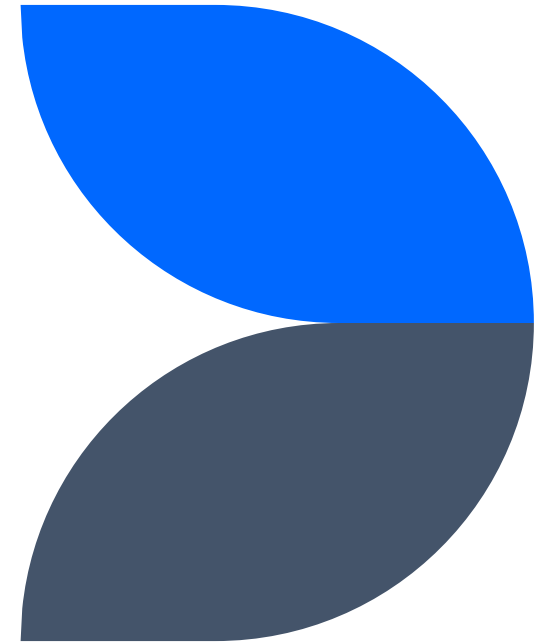




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## Self-Reflection Questions

- Q1: What specific barriers am I currently facing that hinder my ability to pursue my education, and how do these barriers affect my daily life and long-term goals?
- Q2: What resources or support systems do I have in place, and what additional support do I need to successfully overcome these barriers?
- Q3: What small, actionable steps can I take in the next week to begin addressing my barriers and move closer to achieving my educational goals?





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## Conclusion

- Continuing education as a mother is not only a personal journey but also an investment in your future and the well-being of your family.
- By recognizing the transformative power of education, navigating the wide range of educational opportunities, identifying and overcoming personal barriers, and setting realistic, actionable goals, you are positioning yourself for growth and success.
- Education empowers you with new knowledge, skills, and confidence, and opens doors to career advancement, personal fulfillment, and better opportunities for your children.
- This module has equipped you with the tools and mindset to move forward on your educational path, regardless of the challenges you may face.
- As you continue on this journey, remember that every step—no matter how small—brings you closer to achieving your aspirations.
- Embrace this process with determination, knowing that the commitment you make to your education today will have lasting positive impacts for yourself, your family, and your community. You have the power to shape your future, and it starts with the choice to keep learning.

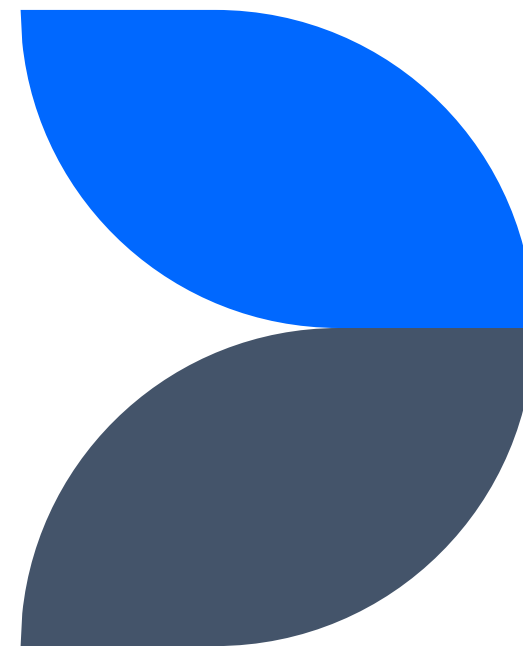
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