

Work & Family Mailbox
Columnist Sue Shellenbarger answers readers' questions
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Q: I appreciated your recent column on at-home parents returning to the work force. I too am an at-home mom trying to find a full-time job, but I face the added burden of being well into my 50s. My age seems immediately to disqualify me for jobs for which I believe I am well-qualified. Any advice? – K.H., Minneapolis

A: Try to anticipate hiring managers' concerns and offer evidence that in your case, they aren't warranted says Patricia Lenkov of Agility Executive Search, New York. Employers may worry, for example, about whether you have energy and stamina for the job, if you will stay more than a short time before retiring, if you will be able to adapt to new situations and learn on the job, or whether you will cost more than a younger hire. If you plan to stay on the job five to seven years – the minimum most hiring managers want, Ms. Lenkov says – say so in the interview. To present yourself as active and healthy, talk about activities you enjoy. Be ready to provide examples of how you have learned new things or pursued new ventures. "Dazzle the interviewer" with what you know about the company, the job and the industry, Ms. Lenkov advises. Be prepared with examples and stories to illustrate the advantages of hiring someone with your experience and track record. And be ready to talk about being flexible in your salary requirements. Among other resources, she recommends workforce50.com and jobs4point0.com