

[Music]

Female: I just always remember running up to the windows, pressing my nose against the glass and watching the planes come in.

Male: My mum, she's a very loving natured person so you know when she's serious it means something.

Male: Wanted to be a part of something bigger than myself.

Female: That's pretty much when my whole life changed.

[Music]

Female: What we do day-to-day for each of us is our own contribution to the world, regardless of your occupation. But can each of us find something that we are truly passionate about, that we can be proud of, and that can make us excited to get up every Monday morning? In this series we chat to people who are out there doing just that, doing what they describe as exactly what they love to do.

Respondent: I guess I never really understood what he did exactly, but I knew when the storms came and the power went out, that he was the one that fixed it, and I always wanted to be that person.

Interviewer: Jessica is adventurous, funny and relatable, after high school she moved from the quietness of Kangaroo Island to Adelaide in the name of her career, and after getting used to the traffic lights and all the people, has gone on to lead a team in her role as a high voltage electrician. Hi Jessica, thanks for joining us today, shall we start with you introducing yourself?

Respondent: My name is Jessica Wooley, and I'm an electrician team leader. I'm 24 years old, I'm from Kangaroo Island originally, and I've moved to Adelaide to pursue my career in electrotechnology.

Interviewer: OK, so now I have a hundred questions, but let's start with Adelaide. You've moved there to follow your career, can you tell me a little bit more about that?

Respondent: I'd just been at school for 12 years, sitting in a classroom, and as much as I was good at it, I didn't necessarily enjoy it, you know, you get out of school and you go home and you, you know, then you do what you want to do, and I didn't go home and go into a classroom and learn things, so I think that's why I picked, you know, the VET pathway. I think it enhances what you've learned, like I said before, you learn something, you learn the basic knowledge of something, but then you get to explore what it does, and I think in high school I was very outdoorsy, I really like the outdoors, I rode motorbikes, I did a lot of camping and all outdoorsy stuff in my personal life and then at school,

you know, I built clocks, I really liked my practical subjects, so when I was about 16 and a half, I think that's when dad suggested maybe you should an apprenticeship, and I thought, why not, and that's pretty much when my whole life changed.

Interviewer: It's amazing that you had that moment, that kind of switch where everything changes. So, you say your life changed, but would you say it changed you as a person?

Respondent: So, I think, just, the move from Kangaroo Island to Adelaide was big in itself, but then, you know, throw that in the bucket with, you know, working with older people, experienced people, in a completely different place, and learning new things, it definitely changed my outlook I can say that, so when I started the apprenticeship I was very narrow minded, sort of, you know what you see, but when I started my apprenticeship I moved to Adelaide there was, you know, roundabouts and traffic lights which I didn't actually have over there, and before that I was sort of just like everybody else, just going with the flow and not really having an idea of what I wanted to do with life, but what other people would want me to do with life, but then once I did my apprenticeship I definitely became more independent and worried more about what I wanted to do and thought a lot more about myself and where I could go, not where other people wanted me to go.

Interviewer: How do you think that compares with perhaps other 24 year old's?

Respondent: I see myself as a very mature person for my age, I've seen all the old term, my head screwed tightly, gets used quite a lot, but I think I've seen a lot of things and been a lot of places that other people wouldn't have necessarily gone, so when it comes to decisions in life I think I have a better view on what to make.

Interviewer: So, on decision making, you said earlier that it was your dad that suggested the apprenticeship to you, did your parents have a big influence on your decision on what to study.

Respondent: My dad was a lines man on Kangaroo Island, so he fixed all the lines in storms and did a lot of repair work, and my mum was a cleaner, and now is a nurse, yeah my dad inspired me to be an electrician, I think, because when the power went out he fixed it and I always idolised that he had the power to do that. I guess I never really understood what he did exactly, but I knew when the storms came and the power went out that he was the one that fixed it, and I always wanted to be that person. I think I owe a lot of credit to my dad for suggesting the job to me, without him actually saying, "You can actually just apply and, you know, see what happens", I probably wouldn't have even considered it an option. So, I think a big thing for me is my dad hasn't been very well lately, so he hasn't actually been able to do his job, he had to sort of,

semi retire early, so for him especially, I'm taking what he, 'cause he works for the same employer, his name further if that makes sense, I'm making him proud.

Interviewer: So, it's safe to say that they were supportive of your decision?

Respondent: I think the good thing about what I've done, and what I've achieved is, my mum's really proud of me, but my brother especially, he wants to do an apprenticeship, he loves what I've done and he sees, or has seen where it can get me, so I think that's definitely an eye opener for the family.

Interviewer: So, to go from family life on Kangaroo Island, being in high school and moving to Adelaide, taking on a new job as an apprentice, to now being a team leader, it sounds like it's been on good thing after another, but has it always been smooth sailing?

Respondent: I think my first day that I started my apprenticeship I was very nervous, especially 'cause they were all men, there was no females at that point, yeah it was pretty tough, I think at first being a female in the trade, but after a while you get to know the different people that you work with and how to approach different people differently, and I think because of my tough skin and comedy side of my personality, I think that's how I got past it, but at some point you realise you've just got to step in and take the opportunity and see what happens, I definitely think, yeah, once I had my first day at work, come home from it and even the first month, I realised that, you know, I could do more than I thought I could, I wasn't as narrow minded, I was already broadening what I knew, and what I could do.

Interviewer: And would you say, you love what you do?

Respondent: I love that every day is different with being an electrician, one day you'll be fixing things, one day you'll be wiring things, and the next day you'll be fault finding and you'll never actually figure out what's wrong, um, yeah, variation is the biggest thing for me and the fact that it doesn't necessarily mean that you have to be the smartest person, but you just have to know how to be a problem solver. I think I make it what I love, any job has its bad days, but if you have a positive attitude and you think that you're good at it, you can make anything what you want to do, so I just make the most out of every day.

Interviewer: That's such a great concept, being grateful for and working hard at something, um really turns it into the thing we love rather than the other way around, I think it's such a useful point, because often people are looking for that one thing, that dream job that'll make them happy, but it sounds like you were saying that you were interested in the subject and it became something you love, because you've dedicated yourself to it in some way.

Respondent: How when the power goes out that's what we do, we fix it, I think that's where my passion starts, and that when the phone rings and there's no power or when there's storms or that we'll be the ones there to fix the problem. I think just knowing that I'm going to work to make a difference is what gets me out of bed every morning. I've definitely found the beginning of my calling in life, I don't intend on staying where I am forever, but at the same time my apprenticeship it has led me to the path I'm in and I plan to keep moving forward. So, I really like being a leader, I really like leadership, so I'm hoping that in the future one day I'll lead more people, and you know, step a bit higher and see the broader spectrum of management.

Interviewer: I'm really glad that you've brought up the topic of leadership, being a team leader at a young age can be challenging for any of us, can you tell me a little bit about how that's been for you?

Respondent: As far as I know I'm the only female team leader, and I started team leading at 22, so, yeah I would've been the youngest one, but I think that helped me develop a lot sooner than I normally would have, it was a big deal being a team leader, there was probably a lot of people that weren't necessarily happy about it, but I'm still here so, it's definitely hard leading someone that's older or more experienced, they might not necessarily agree on everything that you have to say, but at the same time if you step back and realise that they have been there longer and they do have the experience, and use it to your benefit it works out really well.

Interviewer: And what do you think being a good leader means?

Respondent: I think being a good leader isn't about being in charge, it's about showing people the right way to work, the right way to act, and not necessarily being in charge, but just helping others reach, you know, the common goal. So I've been doing further study after me doing my cert four in frontline management, so that's basically learning, because I'm a team leader, learning how to do it better, how to lead more efficiently, lead better teams, and all that kind of leadership stuff, whereas my cert four in leadership, I have already been doing it, but at the same time it's still developing, continuous development, ongoing.

Interviewer: And you think it's important as a leader and as a person to keep trying, keep improving?

Respondent: Definitely, I think continuous improvement is important if you ever want to go anywhere, in anything, in sport, in work, in life. I think part of being a team leader in my job is looking at the picture as a whole picture, rather than just every task, otherwise you're always going to be working in the day to day, and you'll never look for the future, you'll never go anywhere I don't think. I really like being the leader of a team, I like being a role model, I feel like I

have a lot to offer other people, just from my experiences on where I've been, and where other people want to be. I guess for me the more I'm coaching other people, and the more that they want to be coached by me, it means that I feel more successful myself, because it means that they want to listen to where I've been and what I've done. You definitely feel like you're important, that you matter to the community, you definitely feel like people rely on you being there, and you sort of feel like a bit of a mentor or a hero in a way. I feel like I've run once to fit in somewhere, and the fact that in my job I fit in, in the community and I matter to everyone, that is a really good feeling.

Interviewer: That's so refreshing to hear, and I think you've touched on a really important point, that feeling of finding that community and that right fit in a career or workplace can have such an impact on someone's success and happiness levels, so as someone that's very happy, and very successful in your career, what advice would you give to people at that next step, the decision-making stage, wonder where to go with their education, or what their career might be?

Respondent: I would probably say jump at any opportunity that's thrown at you, you never know what can happen, if a door opens, walk through it, and I think that's the advice that was given to me by my dad, and that worked out well for me, but I definitely also say, don't sweat it on the small things, you know, you only live once, just do it.

Interviewer: That's such perfect advice, sometime all you have to do is start somewhere and the rest starts falling into place. Well I think that's the perfect place to end our chat today, so thank you so much for taking the time to speak to us, and good luck in your continued success.

Closing Music

Interviewer: Each person that we speak to this in this Podcast series, is a graduate, a graduate of Vocational Education and Training. This podcast is funded by the Australian Government Department of Education and Training, for more information on Vocational Education and Training, please visit myskills.gov.au.