



My Career Lessons

Lorena Bernal, an actress, model, author and certified life and spiritual coach, shares what she's learned in her portfolio career

Everything that drove me at a young age came from a place of excitement and enjoyment. I started modelling at seven, acting at 11 and won Miss Spain at 17. Looking back, I can't believe how fearless I was – doing press conferences and hosting live galas on TV at such a young age. But really, I was just following joy and I think we can learn a lot from reconnecting with that childhood sense of fun. Even now, whenever I doubt myself or my mind spirals into worst-case scenarios, I try to return to that place I was in as a child and just go for it, without overthinking.

I had no fear at all when I started acting. I'd go for roles and enjoy whatever came, and trusted that the right opportunities would come if they were meant for me. Acting isn't always easy – there are big highs, like appearing in TV series such as *CSI: Miami* – but there are also plenty of challenges: missed chances, lonely travel, rejection. Early on, I learned that the secret is to see those challenges as lessons. Viewing setbacks positively is important; if something doesn't work out, you've gained valuable experience and resilience that you can use in the future.

I'm a strong believer that life doesn't happen to you, it happens for you. During my acting career in Hollywood, just as things were about to really explode into even bigger things, I discovered I was pregnant with

my first child. I was overjoyed, and saw it as a clear sign to pause – and I embraced that pause without doubt or regret. Then, during the eight years I spent focused on raising my three children, a new opportunity arose: a chance to further deepen my studies in life coaching and spirituality. I read, researched, studied and found huge fulfilment in growing both my family and my inner happiness.

Every skill is transferable. I pivoted to life coaching because I could draw on my love of psychology, philosophy and human emotion. I knew I was good at analysing characters – their layers, their reactions, what drives them – and that translates into what I do now. I love listening and helping people work out where they want to make changes, then building a plan to make those changes happen. I think coaching has always been in me. If other things hadn't happened for me so quickly, I would have wanted to study psychology at university.

I've lived and worked in Argentina, Spain, France, the US and now the UK, and each location and culture has shaped my perspective in its own way and made me more open-minded. I've come to believe that understanding what makes you unique as an individual is key to finding your own path. Alongside those lived experiences, I'm also a certified life coach, spiritual life coach and mindfulness practitioner, so I bring a range of practical tools to support the people I work with.

I wrote my book, *It Starts With You: How To Find Lasting Peace And Happiness, in just 20 days.* When I started it, I simply wanted to capture the knowledge I'd gathered from spirituality, science, neuroscience and biology, but also hundreds of books and conversations with experts and my clients. I also wanted to fold in my personal experience as a mother, actress and wife, but I didn't write it with some big plan that would overwhelm me; I just vowed to trust myself and my choices. So I wrote without rereading and editing every sentence. I wanted to get the words down – to trust and enjoy the process – and then I could reflect and edit.

It Starts With You: How To Find Lasting Peace And Happiness, by Lorena Bernal (Thorsons), is out now