

Your life

Secrets of my success

Lieutenant Catherine Ker, 30, is the first woman to qualify as a mine clearance diving officer in the Royal Navy. She's based in Faslane, Scotland

I wanted to change the rules, not break them. I hope that being the first woman to take the course will make others realise that this career path is open to them.

I'm proud of myself. Passing the course is a huge achievement. You're pushed to your physical and mental limits.

Focus on a goal and never let it go. There will be challenges, but nothing's impossible.

I've never been treated any differently for being female. Once you've proved yourself, people accept you. I'm just Diver Ker to my colleagues.

Don't strive to be liked, but listen to everyone. When you're working in a team, everybody is valuable and should be included.

I don't think I'm brave. I'm no different to any other man or woman serving in the armed forces. We're all just doing the work we need to do.

Know your limits. I've been sleep deprived and I've endured other high-pressure scenarios during training. I know when to say, 'I need some time out.'

'Accept no-one's definition of your life but your own.' I always carry that quote by Harvey Fierstein [American actor and writer] with me – it's quite apt. royalnavy.mod.uk ▶

Taking the plunge: Catherine is the Royal Navy's first female mine clearance diving officer

