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CONTINUING EDUCATION | JOB TRAINING | LIFELONG LEARNING

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## MID TERM FEB, MARCH, APRIL START DATES WILL HELP ADJUST YOUR LEARNING AROUND COVID DISRUPTIONS

BY WENDY TERRY



Photo by Chris Montgomery on Unsplash

**C**COVID has disrupted our continuing education plans as it has our economy-our job/career plans. We have been in the latest lock down since Christmas Day and when will it let up apparently mid February .

Learning Curves usually distributes our Winter issue in December, encouraging our readers to register before the holidays to make sure they get into winter term start date classes-many starting early January. By registering early you would help ensure there will be enough enrollments, so that classes won't be cancelled for the lack of a few more registrations.

This year we have been self-isolating so as we emerge mid February, we can enroll in classes with a mid term start dates. There are many, we researched how many in this article for you.

This year we are distributing our Winter issue in early February with this feature on mid-term start dates. In our minds we might think continuing education classes start early September (Fall), early January (Winter) and May (Spring) but many providers offer courses with mid-term start dates and have courses that start monthly or throughout the term.

In our Fall 2020 issue we created an adult education mosaic for our readers and in the Spring 2020 issue we created a guide to finding an apprenticeship (education for skilled trades working/learning with an employer)

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OPINION PIECE

## THE NEW NORMAL AND THE NEW POSITIVITY (IT IS NOT HELPING)



**BY GILDA TAVENESE, MSW**



**SONNY K.H. WONG, M.ED., RD**

**T**here are lots of challenges we are going through right now. Many of these challenges are the experiences of engaging in awkward human behavior. Let me explore some queries with you to make my point. Is it strange to not hug our loved ones? Is it tricky to stay 6 feet apart when socializing with others? Is it difficult to not see your friends and family for long periods of time? And what about virtual learning? Some have identified these everyday scenarios as the new normal to help us cope. Do you take comfort in accepting this description which attempts to normalize something that is

clearly not normal? We can find our traditional normal if we just go back to our foundational humanistic premise. Let's micro examine our thoughts, values, and behaviours to make some meaning of our current discomforts. Thought – is protecting each other by staying apart. Value – is showing compassion to those who are suffering while preserving our safety. Behaviour – is speaking with your friends and family to explain your cautious behaviour because you do not want to put them at risk. When the news media socially construct a new normal for us during these times, it is implying that we need to

recreate newness rather than dig deeper within ourselves to activate our internal resources for survival. The creation of this new normal label could somehow deny us of how we ought to perceive our current reality. Is it too idealistic to remember that we are a collective? Is it fear that is dividing us? What is fear? Some scholars have broken down the word fear in parts to help us examine it. Our FEARS can be explored through asking ourselves what false evidence is appearing as real during ambiguous situations? As soon

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# THE NEW NORMAL AND THE NEW POSITIVITY (IT IS NOT HELPING)

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as we wrap our heads around what is fearful, we can work on developing healthy coping/defensive behaviours with accurate information. Historically, we have demonstrated flexibility in making decisions in ambiguous situations with unpredictable outcomes for the purpose of preservation. Time and time again, the over utilization of toxic positivity is simply mistaken for helping people to cope or defend from perceived harm. A pessimistic outlook is about empathy, fact finding, and generating alternative solutions. This approach can be a good dosage against toxic positivity. Allow me to explain this reasoning with a few common scenarios. Empathy. You speak with a friend about some symptoms you have been having, which you speculate may be related to Covid-19. Both of you are in your early 20's. You explain to your friend that you are worried that you may have Covid-19. You further explain that you are scared about getting sick. Your friend tells you to stay positive, not to worry and adds "we are young – it does not happen to us". Furthermore, your friend brings up the fact that he likes to take a positive approach to life and questions why you have to be negative and jump to conclusions. How does this dialogue bring these two people together? The negative labeling of a person's worries over uncertain situations is not helpful. This kind of toxic positivity is dismissive, rather than

constructive. The friend could have demonstrated empathy by exploring where to find accurate information about Covid-19 symptoms.

Fact Finding. You talk with another colleague about your distress over job losses. You state that you recently heard on the news that there are over 2 million Canadians out of work, and some of those jobs are related to the same occupation. You are stressed over the notion that you may be on the chopping board, and fears that you will be unable to support your family. You add that being 55 years old does not help with re-employment. Although, your company announced that there will be no layoffs – yet. The colleague tries to comfort his co-worker/friend by saying "look on the bright side – we have a job – we are not part of those 2 million". Although there is an attempt by the colleague to comfort his co-worker/friend – downward social comparison, pointing out that they are not unemployed, serves only as a Band-Aid statement. The family man's fear of not being able to support his family is real. Toxic positivity is denying of emotions despite the person's expressed discomfort. This colleague could have praised his friend's work performance, talked about seniority and/or explored available government emergency funds. Alternative Solution. You have recently heard

about the new 'no visiting other households' public health recommendation in your region. While checking in with a friend over Zoom, you were told that two of her closest friends and you are all invited to come over to her place for her 35th birthday celebration dinner. You explain to your friend that you would love to attend, but you worry about asymptomatic people. You add that you want to be healthy to celebrate other future occasions. You further explain that you are the only parental care provider, therefore you cannot risk getting sick. You sense your friend's disapproval when she says to you that you still must live a little and create some kind of normal during these stressful times. It appears that your friend is offended that you implied that her party would put people at risk. You are speechless and do not know how to respond to her. Toxic positivity is the forced silence of emotions and the denial of human experiences. In this case, what if the birthday girlfriend would have said – "I hear you – and it is concerning – would you be opened to zooming in our dinner, so we won't miss you?". During ambiguous times, we do not have to take the all or nothing approach. There are times that we should activate some pessimism to move us forward. A person with a pessimistic point of view is deemed as negative almost all the time – seeing only those things that are going wrong –but there are some who

believe these people have a realistic view of life. In those scenarios, what is so wrong with erring on the safer side of the situation. For example, suggesting your friend get tested for Covid-19, empathizing with their worries over the loss of abilities to support their family, or showing compassion for your friend's caution for parental responsibilities. We should not confuse caution with negativity in risky situations. The concept of this new normal does not negate the fundamentals for mutual human respect for others wellbeing. The new normal does not mean to test out if science is wrong by living out uncontrolled novice social experimentations with real health consequences. The new normal should not be a concept to deem that some people have strong coping skills while others are weak. Compassion should lead our behaviours, followed by an understanding that we all experience a sense of loss when circumstances change. It is this sense of loss that unites us during stressful situations. Not only personal loss, but loss of control. Let us acknowledge this loss that unites us, and if we are ever in doubt that we are engaging in toxic positivity – we can always just listen to one another.

*We value your opinion. Please let us know what you think about this column. Send comments to [learningcurves@hotmail.com](mailto:learningcurves@hotmail.com).*

## NEW YEAR, NEW NAME AND NEW STYLE

BY LISA TRUDEL

The last time I wrote an article for Learning Curves it was 2020. I worked at a Career Centre named the Centre for Education and Training, and when I read this publication I would carefully turn the pages of the print newspaper.

It is now 2021, the Career Centre where I work had a name change to Achev (a rebranding initiative that started before the global pandemic of COVID-19), and next to my laptop is a list of online publications that I write for. A large post-it note reminds me to let everyone know about the best site in Toronto: [www.learning-curves.org](http://www.learning-curves.org). No more turning pages, only turning toward a new era of job search and career planning.

There is no doubt that the global pandemic has changed how we job search, where we job search, and what jobs we can aim for. Here are 3 points to help move you forward in 2021:

- 1) Embrace remote communication. It is here to stay. Remote work was around before the global pandemic, however in March of 2020 it was as if someone pressed the "fast forward" button. Even when we all have vaccines and there is no more "stay at home" orders many people might be working a combination style model that blends one week in the physical office keyboarding on the desktop and one week at home keyboarding on the company laptop.
- 2) Research companies that recruit with a DEI-focus. A bright part of 2021 is the trend toward workplace diversity, equity and inclusion policies. Not all companies will be as committed as they like the public to think they are, so do your homework and evaluate an employer's commitment to DEI. Ensure that the company you want

to work for has a DEI policy. Only aim for employers who are diversity-friendly.

- 3) Improve your virtual networking skills. Networking is still the #1 way of finding employment however it no longer includes meeting large groups of people in traditional in-person formats where you would enthusiastically shake everyone's hands. Instead, networking is about updating your social media profile before you make connections. It means ensuring your LinkedIn profile has an impressive "about" section, a captivating photo, and an inspiring banner background photo. It means more than LinkedIn too. Virtual networking includes having access to multiple apps, taking the time to research who the right people are to connect with, and most of all having clarity of message. People like

to connect with others who know who they are, and where they are going.

To find out more about how you can improve your job search style, contact your local Employment Ontario Career Centre and give yourself the gift of a Career Specialist to coach you to success.

*This article was written by Lisa Trudel, Career Specialist with Achev (formerly the Centre for Education and Training). You can contact Lisa at: [ltrudel@achev.ca](mailto:ltrudel@achev.ca)*

*We value your opinion. Please let us know what you think about this column. Send comments to [learningcurves@hotmail.com](mailto:learningcurves@hotmail.com).*

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# EVERY INDIVIDUAL HAS OPPORTUNITIES FOR EMPLOYMENT:

## HOW JVS TORONTO'S VISION IS CHANGING LIVES, ONE PERSON AND JOB AT A TIME



The Tailor Project, JVS Toronto, 1947



Max Enkin, JVS Toronto founder (centre), testing at Bergen Belsen Displaced Persons Camp, 1947



Kim Coulter, JVS Toronto's current CEO & President

### How JVS Toronto began.

JVS Toronto was founded in 1947 by a group of Jewish business leaders to provide employment and vocational services to Holocaust survivors and veterans of the Second World War.

When JVS Toronto opened their doors more than seventy years ago, Holocaust survivors and Jewish immigrants faced prejudice and restrictive hurdles to employment and training in Canada. Workplace discrimination was high and society lacked sympathy and understanding for those who desperately needed to rebuild their lives. The need to support Holocaust survivors, Jewish immigrants and veterans of the Second World War in their search for meaningful employment was significant and urgent at the time.

JVS Toronto's mission and leadership eventually evolved while maintaining their vision for the future – that every individual has opportunities for employment.

### JVS Toronto today.

Building on their success in serving the Jewish community and the value of helping others, JVS Toronto expanded their outreach to serve the broader community.

This shift in service delivery is representative of one of JVS Toronto's greatest strengths as an agency, and has been a key factor in helping to continuously uphold their vision 74 years later. Through the years, they have consistently identified evolving needs in the community, and rapidly adjusted service delivery to address these needs as they emerged.

Today, JVS Toronto's success is primarily rooted in the ability to identify gaps in service delivery early on, adopt innovative solutions, and commit to continuous improvement. With each passing decade, the focus on employment services remains unchanged, and only deepens with economic fluctuations, globalization, rapidly changing technology; upping the skills and education job seekers need to stay

competitive. One person and job at a time, JVS Toronto remains dedicated to changing lives through the power of employment.

### What JVS Toronto accomplished last year.

Last year, JVS Toronto helped over 13,000 new individuals from various backgrounds and experiences gain access to meaningful employment. JVS Toronto has built a reputation in the community as a leader in employment services for individuals with disabilities, newcomers to Canada, at-risk youth, and mature workers. A team of dedicated, experienced and multi-disciplinary professionals are reaching out to and providing individualized service to clients facing a variety of complex barriers.

Over the past year, JVS Toronto has:

- Served 7,350 new individuals originating from over 100 countries around the world
- Served 3,573 youth across all programs
- Served 992 individuals across our Jewish community funded programs
- Delivered 459 assessments and counselling sessions in our Career, Education and Psychology division
- Served 145 individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities in specialized employment and inclusion programs.
- Grew their database to 6,022 employers
- Grew their partnerships to 311 organizations internationally

### Achievements and setbacks during COVID-19.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a crisis that will have a lasting impact on JVS Toronto's clients, employees and community for years to come. As changes are forced upon all aspects of our lives, the labour market and the delivery of employment services has been significantly impacted.

At the best of times, job searching is much more than just finding the right position; it's about overcoming a variety

of barriers that stand in the way. With the many additional challenges brought on by the pandemic, individuals walk through JVS Toronto's doors feeling demoralized, making the difficult task of finding a job even harder. For those that were already vulnerable, this crisis will bring about even greater challenges. JVS Toronto's clients are more susceptible to stress, trauma, and fear than ever before.

However, JVS Toronto's commitment to strengthening their services, adapting to unprecedented needs, and meeting people wherever they are in their journey to employment continues to be critical.

JVS Toronto responded quickly at the onset of the pandemic. They developed a strategy to ensure uninterrupted delivery of services virtually while protecting the health and well-being of their employees and clients. The agency quickly adopted new technology, committing to transparency, and introduced new ideas to meet client needs.

This experience, while incredibly challenging at times, has been critical to JVS Toronto in building resilience as an organization. They continue to find ways to navigate new problems, be innovative in their solutions, and become stronger because of it.

As a leader in employment services, JVS Toronto is also paying close attention to the rapidly changing labour market that resulted from the pandemic and the long-term impacts this will have on the future of workplaces. While job loss is one unfortunate reality of COVID-19, many individuals in the workforce are not just doing their regular jobs, but have transformed their roles and taken on different responsibilities. The need for new skills has become apparent, particularly around technology and remote work, and this change is here to stay. With the strength and support of the community, JVS Toronto has been able to pivot and deliver new and different programs to meet new and different needs.

To ensure that the right content would be offered to assist clients throughout the

pandemic, the organization introduced new and relevant workshops including Mental Health & Wellness for Teens, Start a Business from Home, Learning to Pivot: Skills for Career Adaptability to Emerge Stronger, Career Resilience in Uncertain Times, and Stress & Self Care During COVID-19. They also created blog posts that were specific to situations that people were experiencing to increase readership and followers.

### Looking to the future.

As a multi-service agency with general and population specific programming, JVS Toronto participates in knowledge sharing, capacity building and research on a wide range of topics in the community. Through multi-sectoral collaborations, they ensure research in the community, program evaluation etc. is shared broadly, and that they maintain a client-centered focus to promote the interest of the target population in their community.

In addition, JVS Toronto is committed to ensuring that employees across their locations relate to clients with their own lived experiences.

JVS Toronto contact information.

JVS Toronto has 9 locations across Toronto and York Region. Interested job seekers can visit [www.jvstoronto.org/new-clients](http://www.jvstoronto.org/new-clients), contact 416-787-1151 or [services@jvstoronto.org](mailto:services@jvstoronto.org).

Volunteers can visit [www.jvstoronto.org/give-back/volunteer](http://www.jvstoronto.org/give-back/volunteer), contact 416-649-1636 or [volunteering@jvstoronto.org](mailto:volunteering@jvstoronto.org).

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# MID TERM FEB, MARCH, APRIL START DATES WILL HELP ADJUST YOUR LEARNING AROUND COVID DISRUPTIONS

BY WENDY TERRY

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See [www.learning-curves.org](http://www.learning-curves.org) for back issues and stories. In the Fall 2018 issue Learning Curves did an article “Schools Offering Continuous Intake to help those who might have missed the Fall start date classes, we are updating this article for the Winter 2021 term.

There are so many providers in the Adult Education Mosaic. See Fall 2020 issue at [www.learning-curves.org](http://www.learning-curves.org) to scan for providers. Our best advice is to call the ones you are most interested in and ask if they have a list of class start dates they can email you or just tell you what is starting in the next month. Talking to a front line person who knows a course that would fit your needs and its scheduling is better than looking at an information loaded web site where you often have to drill down from program to course to schedule than back up to do it all over again. Print calendars do not include schedules nowadays so the scanning method has become the drilling down one.

As the Winter 2021 Learning Curves will be distributed in early February we looked for courses in the Winter Term from February 8th on. You have plenty to choose from so don't sit it out till the Spring term, sign up now for the Winter mid term start date courses..

## UNIVERSITIES

### York University – School of Continuing Studies

In scanning start dates we found several that start in February Block Chain Development; Digital Marketing; IT Audit Execution.

Note in their English Language Institute a lot of programs start in August rather than the usual September Fall term start dates.

### University of Toronto- School of Continuing Studies.

Given they offer over 1,000 courses in 10 program areas this is a lot more work than York U which has fewer offerings. I drilled down to scan start dates in the following ten program areas, Unique Programs, Arts and Humanities, Business Finance Management, Creative Writing, Health and Social Sciences, Information Technology Environment and Engineering, Languages and Translation, Learning Design, Marketing and Communications and each of these has sub categories, then course titles, then schedules. Sigh.

I found over 80 courses with start dates mid February. I found over 70 with March start dates, and over 20 with April start dates. There are 170 in total to chose from.

And I found an intriguing course, Philosophy and Artificial Intelligence but it starts in the Spring Summer term, May 6th. A sign of the times to partner these two subjects no? To find it I drilled down from Arts and Humanities to a sub category Philosophy and Law.

Those starting in March April would often be in your mind as a Spring term course but they are in the Winter term. The Winter Term classes are on line but the Spring term ones starting in May are more likely to be listed in class so SCS may be hoping that we are out of lock down by then.

Personally, I found an interesting course under Micro Courses under Unique programs

but it started Jan. 18th, “Electronic Records and Information Management.” We used to put what was important to record in a letter or memo and social chatting was lost in the phone call. Now they are blended in an email, tweet etc. How do you maintain essential files in this new era. How do you have access to what most employees consider a private email even though it is work related.

A friend also pointed out in making changes to a document as it moves from person to person on line, how does one know which one is the final copy to be officially filed. He works for the Ontario government so finding documents in electronic records is important.

### Ryerson- School of Continuing Studies

I drilled down on over 400 courses offered on line. Most have start dates the first week of Winter term- Jan, 18 on. Like my York U search I found three that started in February: Promote Front Line Workers Mental Health; Sexuality Power and Pleasure; Voice Play On Line.

So better to search for Spring/Summer term start dates which can be found on the same drill down search. Most start in May.

Like in my U of T School of Continuing Studies I found a couple of Ryerson courses of special interest: Africa Before 1850, before colonization and Modern Africa, after colonization. They are both offered in the Spring Summer Term.

## COLLEGES

### George Brown

George Brown says on their web site they have 950 on line courses in Continuing Education. Many start in the first two weeks of January. But many others start later. I drilled down for each course from an alphabetical listing of courses to tabulate start dates, starting from February 8th when Learning Curves starts to be distributed. I found 222 courses starting throughout March, 32 in April and 20 after February 8th. In addition 58 course had two start dates one in March and one in April and there were 9 with two start dates one in February and March (two sessions). So that is over 334 courses you can chose from if you missed the traditional January Winter start dates courses.

In addition there were 58 courses with what they call continuous start dates, no specific start date or end date – though there is time limit for getting course work done. So that takes it to 392 courses you could choose from if you missed the traditional Winter Start dates.

What is interesting is that all 950 Continuing Education George Brown courses are on line. Some are designated as Online Option which indicates they have just recently been put online due to COVID no doubt. Other are just listed as on line so I assume they are regular George Brown on line courses. Twenty- eight are Learn Ontario courses. The website [www.learnontario.ca](http://www.learnontario.ca) offers distance education courses through a consortium of the 24 Ontario colleges.

Mind a lot of George Brown courses indicated they were not being offered in the Winter term but if you are interested George Brown says “keep checking back.”

### Centennial

Centennial says on their website there are 1,242 on line courses for Part- time studies (continuing education). This time I kept track of how many I drilled down on, 1,218 so where did miss the other 24. Again I drilled down for each course from an alphabetical listing by course code to tabulate start dates starting from February 8th. I found 55 courses starting in March, and 48 with sections starting after Feb. 8th. So you would have 103 course to choose from.

Of interest of the 1,218 courses, 586 were not scheduled either for the Winter or Spring and 372 were offered in the traditional start date for Winter Term courses, mostly Jan. 12th. Note not all of those courses would be running if they did not get enough enrollment. Most classes were offered on line but the Spring term listings often indicated campuses in hopes the COVID lock down would be over.

All Winter courses were listed as being offered “distance online”. Some were not under a course category like Business but under one titled Distance Learning. Were these Ontario Learn classes, unlike George Brown it does not say. The ones that are just designated “distance online” have most likely just been converted to deal with COVID.

### Seneca

Praise be. If you put [senecacollege.ca/ce/online/online-correspondence-month.html](http://senecacollege.ca/ce/online/online-correspondence-month.html) you will get a listing of Winter Term courses by month, first by January, then February, then March. You do not have to drill down through all the courses for Continuing Education to see which ones are offered in each month for the Spring term. This saves search time.

I did analyze the February listings to identify how many had starts dates Feb 8th or later- 28. March had 106 and April had 44 So in total that is 178.

The courses are categorized by On Line Virtual Class Room and On Line Self Directed.

I started to wonder if On Line Self Directed would ensure your class would not be cancelled for lack of enough registrations. They take you in one at a time, whereas the classroom model whether in class or virtual class would require a designated number of registrants.

### Humber

Humber also has an option to list their courses by start date. So I could chose February start dates, March start dates and April ones. In total there were 19 starting February 8th and after, 69 in March and 75 in April for 164 in total.

What I found interesting is when you click on each course to get the schedule you are also given a contact person and phone number. Perfect. As websites never seem to answer your particular question. Most of the courses are listed as being offered by Distance Learning/On line.

My favourite course at Humber is Math for Moms and Dads (How to tutor your children). It should have increased enrollments given all the home schooling with COVID.

### Sheridan

Sheridan lists 192 course for the Winter term. Of those, 6 were offered starting Feb 8th or later, 11 with start dates in March and 1 in April. So in total there was 18 starting after Feb.8th.

These Winter term courses were listed as a whole so there was more drill down work/time to identify start dates. Most of these were coded Virtual Campus so I assume these have been put online re COVID.

One was listed as Online (Ont. Learn) the [www.ontariolearn.ca](http://www.ontariolearn.ca) website where all colleges contribute distance ed courses.

### Durham

This seemed to be the most work/time as the courses were listed by interest area. So you had to drill down to the schedules for the courses in each interest area. Some courses were listed in more than one interest area.

Durham seemed to list the most Ontario Learn courses which often have monthly start dates. If they were just coded online the course usually started the first of January and were Ontario Learn courses. If they were coded Monthly Intake On Line, they were still Ontario Learn courses but often with two starts dates for one course March and April sessions and some just a March start date or an April start date.

Note when I was counting courses I do not tabulate sessions, so a course with a March and April start date was counted as one course not the two sessions. This was the practice I used with other colleges

Durham seemed to have the most Ontario Learn courses, these courses are listed on the website [www.learnontario.ca](http://www.learnontario.ca) which offers distance ed courses through a consortium of the 24 Ontario colleges.

So what are the numbers at Durham 11 for February, 67 for March, 60 for ones with March and April start dates, and 8 for April- 146 in total.

Whew, that ends the drill down work, so we hope you will get going as there is still lots to chose from in Winter Term Start Dates.

### Schools

On the [www.learning-curves.org](http://www.learning-curves.org) site on the cover page there is a chart of 10 school Boards in Toronto and the GTA. If you click on “see more” below the start of the article about this chart the chart will expand so you see numbers to call. Most of these programs are now offered on line. ELS and Literacy have continuous intake, the adult day schools have four terms a year so the Spring term is coming up.

### Community Programs, Career Colleges, Professional Associations

These providers are harder to find as there are many to find whereas there are only 6 colleges and 3 universities in Toronto and the GTA, but unlike these institutions they each offer fewer courses so are easier to research once you find them. In the Fall 2019 issue of Learning Curves on page 6 an article “How to Find Community Programs, Career Colleges and Professional Associations” details how to find this multitude of providers. See [www.learning-cuves.org](http://www.learning-cuves.org).

In short to find Community Programs search 211, to find Career Colleges search the Ministry of Colleges and University web site, to find Professional associations search the directory of Associations Canada on line.



# THE IMPACT OF CO-EXISTING CONDITIONS ON LIFE AND WORK

BY CARTER HAMMETT



It should have been a day like any other. But when George McKenzie, then 21, woke up, something didn't feel right.

"My tongue was all cottony and I actually wondered if I got beaten up," he recalls.

A trip to a clinic and a blood test revealed the answer: He'd experienced a seizure. He was given a prescription, but chose not to fill it, thinking he would get better.

Flash-forward 10 years, and McKenzie found himself in an altercation with the police. Since his teens, he had experienced "impulsive outbursts" and "was involved in fights, breaking things, was verbally abusive"; it was behaviour he didn't understand. This time, the police officers saw something McKenzie didn't, suggesting something might be wrong. McKenzie eventually found his way to a therapist, who diagnosed him with borderline personality disorder.

He realized he was now officially living with at least two conditions: epilepsy and a mental-health challenge. But at last, he also had an answer.

## Living with comorbidities

Many people living with episodic/invisible disabilities live with comorbidities.

"Comorbidities happen when there are two or more conditions that occur at the same time," explains Dr Hadley Kolton, a psychologist with JVS Toronto and a specialist in assessing learning disabilities.

Because of their invisible nature, comorbidities are often difficult to track, but some sources like [epilepsy.com](http://epilepsy.com) have shown that about 20% of people with a primary diagnosis of epilepsy also have Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). A similar figure applies to information processing disorders such as dyslexia. Approximately 20-50% of people with epilepsy are reported to also experience depression or anxiety. Almost 800,000 Canadians report having a mental health issue like depression or anxiety on top of one or more physical disabilities.

In a literature analysis from a 2016 UK study titled Complexities and challenges: working with multiple health conditions, researchers found:

- Older workers, people from low socio-economic backgrounds and women had a higher prevalence of comorbidity
- People with two or more long-term health conditions are less likely to be in employment
- Comorbid mental-health disorders appear to negatively affect work participation and absenteeism

One of Kolton's clients has ADHD and also has difficulty reading. "He's always wanted to be a personal trainer and he's good at it," Kolton says. "He has a side gig as a janitor at a school and also a retail job to support himself, but in the process he's not realizing his potential."

## Impact on work

Four years after his epilepsy diagnosis, George McKenzie had a seizure at work. Employed in collections for a major investment firm at

the time, McKenzie woke up on the floor surrounded by staff, asking if he was okay. It was a wake-up call that ultimately led him to do more to manage his co-existing health conditions.

"They're intertwined," he says. "I have lots of support, through Epilepsy Toronto, through medication and mindfulness." He also sees a therapist once a month.

But McKenzie also finds himself in a holding pattern about returning to work. His seizures tend to follow stressful events. "I'm afraid of having another seizure at work and that makes me anxious."

## Strategies for success

People living with comorbidities may benefit from support from career professionals to determine goals and figure out a path to achieve them, which could include identifying accommodations.

Maria Eugenia Ricote is an employment case counsellor with Woodgreen Community Services Work Initiative Network (WIN), which helps people living with mental health conditions find meaningful work. She believes it's important for a client to identify which diagnosis is affecting their life the most and prioritize accordingly.

"You need to define 'success' for yourself," she encourages jobseekers, "and ask, what disabilities get in the way? After that you have to go into exploration – what are your values, what are the deal breakers and what's unacceptable?"

Ricote says, in terms of helping clients be successful, it doesn't matter to her what their diagnosis or mental-health status is. "I care about your strengths and weaknesses, so I can help you navigate and develop strategies to help you reach your goal."

Kolton says that self-acceptance and ownership of their situation can help clients identify accommodations that can help them succeed at work, such as requesting additional time to complete a task.

"Self-acceptance is one of the keys to overcoming this situation," he says. "Reaching out to others for help and support is important. If you keep quiet in that dark cave, you might destroy your purpose for good."

Living with comorbidities can be challenging, Kolton says. "But with the appropriate support and in the right context, people living with comorbidities can be quite successful."

*Carter Hammett is the Employment Services Manager with Epilepsy Toronto. He holds a Bachelor of Community Studies degree along with diplomas in journalism, social work and adult education. His work has appeared in the National Post, Toronto Star and Toronto Sun, among other publications. He is the author of three books including Benchmarking: A Guide to Hiring and Managing Persons with Learning Disabilities (ALDER, 2005).*

*We value your opinion. Please let us know what you think about this column. Send comments to [learningcurves@hotmail.com](mailto:learningcurves@hotmail.com).*

# RESUME MUST-HAVES FOR 2021

If you are job searching this year it is a new era. It is a time of online applications and interviews via Zoom, however all job seekers still require a resume. This has not been deleted yet.

Whether you are applying for job, networking with a new LinkedIn contact, or applying for a college program, you can be asked "please email your resume to me". Here are 4 tips to ensure that you are prepared for your next opportunity:

- 1) Include your expertise with remote technologies. If your resume still states "good computer skills including Excel and PowerPoint" it is time to update this to a 2021 expression. Include a line such as: "Advanced digital fluency skills with experience in using remote technologies to communicate with project teams".
- 2) Include how you have adapted to COVID-19. All of us has dealt with the global pandemic and there is no reason to shy away from it. In your "summary" or "highlights" section include a line such as "Accepted remote responsibilities within 2-week time period resulting in continued customer satisfaction".
- 3) Include the link to your LinkedIn profile. At the very top of your resume should be your name, and then on the next line should be your city, and then your phone

number and then your email address. Be sure to include one more contact which is the link to your LinkedIn. However, only include it if it is ready to be shown to the world. Statistics prove that LinkedIn is just as important as a resume, so promise yourself to create one this year.

- 4) Update your final line. In the past, resumes used to state "References Available Upon Request" as the final line. Then the trend was to eliminate this altogether. In 2021, it is wise to add "Recommendations and Endorsements on LinkedIn". This encourages the reader to read your LinkedIn if they haven't already. You should have at least two wonderful recommendations from two of your LinkedIn connections. These can be better than a traditional reference, since they are your cheerleaders for the whole world to see.

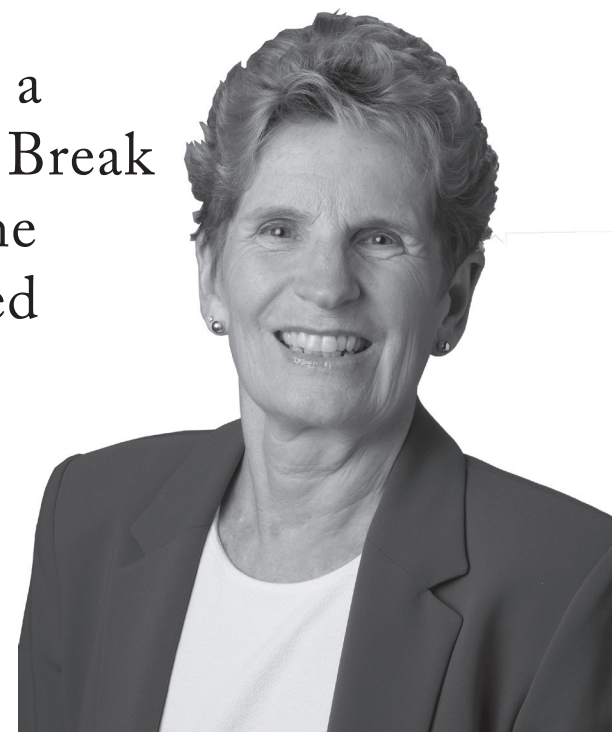
To find out more about how to write an impressive resume or how to update your LinkedIn profile, contact your local Employment Ontario Career Centre and give yourself the gift of a Career Specialist to coach you to success.

*This article was written by Lisa Trudel, Career Specialist with Achev (formerly the Centre for Education and Training). You can contact Lisa at: [ltrudel@achev.ca](mailto:ltrudel@achev.ca)*



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# ADULT EDUCATION HAVE AND HAVE NOTS IN COVID TIMES

## ESL

### Haves

Newcomer students doing LINC classes as these are funded by the federal government who is not cancelling classes if the number of students attending class have dropped due to moving to online instruction due to COVID

### Have nots

Newcomer students doing ESL classes as these are funded by the provincial government who has just given notice to 90 classes at the Toronto District School Board that they will be closed if the number of students attending class does not increase.

## JOB SEARCH

### Haves

Most Employment Ontario Centres have been closed for in person service for months now but if you have a computer and access to the Internet you can get help through ZOOM workshops and emails.

### Have nots

If you do not have access to the Internet (library access has been closed or time limited on a computer for months now) you are a have not.

## CONTINUING ED COURSES

### Haves

If you have access to the Internet and a camera attached to your computer, you could do an on line class and interact face to face with other students and the teacher. You are a have.

### Have nots

If you do not have access to the Internet when your course is being held and no camera attached to your computer so you could interact with other students and the teacher, you are a have not.

Let Learning Curves know about other Haves and Have nots in Adult Education- the daily press never seems to write stories about the plight of adult learners.

## CAN'T FIND THE FALL ISSUE OF LEARNING CURVES? GO ONLINE.

Learning Curves along with many of its partners in education and community services, are affected by COVID-19. Our Fall issue was affected by closures and we could not effectively cover our usual distribution of the paper: over 16,000 print run and over 650 sites in Toronto and the GTA.

The Fall issue is on line at [www.learning-curves.org](http://www.learning-curves.org). It features a mosaic of adult education offerings in Toronto and the GTA.

We would be happy to send you hard copies or drop them off, of the Fall issue if you contact us with your address at [learningcurves@hotmail.com](mailto:learningcurves@hotmail.com).

We thank all our readers, who have doubled on line and our advertisers without whose support Learning Curves would not exist for over the past 20 plus years-first issue January 1999. Many of our back issues are on line at [www.learning-curves.org](http://www.learning-curves.org)

Look for us in all the usual places as the province opens up.

# LEARNINGCURVES



# LEARNINGCURVES

**Learning Curves has changed. We've been hard at work behind the scenes creating an even better website experience for our readers!**

The [learning-curves.org](http://learning-curves.org) site has been UPDATED, so you can find recent articles as well as older ones under subject headings. Not only will you be able to enjoy Learning Curves in print and online, you'll have even more ways to enjoy it on the go as the new site is more mobile friendly.

You'll have free access to all of our content, updated frequently, with access to the archives as well.

**[WWW.LEARNING-CURVES.ORG](http://WWW.LEARNING-CURVES.ORG)**

We will continue to update the site so visit often. We will be updating the progress on our twitter feed in the coming weeks.

**Would you like to post an ad on one of the .org site's page?**

Email us at [learningcurves@hotmail.com](mailto:learningcurves@hotmail.com)

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# UNIVERSITY IN THE COMMUNITY REDEFINING ESSENTIAL WORK

JOANNE MACKAY-BENNETT

University in the Community is an initiative of the Workers' Educational Association, the publisher of Learning Curves. We believe that learning is inclusive, lifelong and active. Each year, UitC offers free-of-charge, semester-long courses to adults whose access to higher education may have been limited by life circumstances. UitC is supported by the Faculty of Arts and Science, Senior College, and Innis College, University of Toronto.

Spring and Summer at University in the Community was a time like no other. Of course, every term is marked by its own tone and its particular set of concerns brought to the class each week by a wonderful group of individuals. But in Spring 2020, we were united by a large and looming presence. A pandemic.

When we first got together via Zoom during the Spring and Summer months, it seemed as if by some fluke we had landed in a place that we had had no intention of visiting. We found solace in seeing ourselves onscreen in a new, virtual huddle. We talked about grief, fear, anxiety, and loneliness, even if we didn't specifically use those words.

Our initial sense of being part of a broad and all-encompassing human cohort is captured in this line from *The Composite Nation*, written in 1869 by American abolitionist and statesman, Frederick Douglass: A smile or a tear has not nationality; joy and sorrow speak alike to all nations.

Our empathy and solidarity with our fellow human beings has remained rock-solid. But in September, we also became aware that some people were more vulnerable to this lethal disease than others. Fissures in our social structure that, to be clear, have always been there, were exposed and illuminated by newly-tabulated data showing that those who were most severely impacted often shared a social susceptibility to the disease: crowded living arrangements, economic hardship, inadequate workplace protections, health challenges and unequal

access to medical care, among others. Were we really 'all in it together'? Or did some suffer disproportionately more than others?

During the Fall term, UitC classes focussed on the crisis itself and on concerns that simultaneously arose with the crisis. We looked at the pandemic from the perspectives of history, of science, the arts, politics and public health.

In the upcoming Winter term, we will focus on our response to the crisis. For all of us, this pandemic is an exceptional and unique event. We need to ask ourselves how our response to the crisis can be equal to this once-in-a-hundred-years event. What can we do, what must we do, if we are to strengthen and reinvigorate the ideas and ideals of democracy that we have so often taken for granted?

With the guidance and expertise of an exceptional group of speakers this term, we will look at ideas that are not necessarily new but that we look at differently now. We will learn about what basic income is and how it aims to alleviate the catastrophic financial reality that has affected so many people. We will ask ourselves what civic assemblies are and what a deliberative democracy might look like. We will consider whether citizenship has moral obligations and if so, what those obligations might be.

One of the secondary goals of this term will be to redefine what it means to do essential work. One year after the initial lockdown, it is clear that many of the ills that were exposed will not disappear with the quelling of the pandemic. Our response to the pandemic is part and parcel of the crisis itself. How we choose to respond will be a decision that each of us will make. Becoming informed, giving access to new ideas, participating in the health of the city we share, that too, is essential work.

If you would like to learn more about becoming part of University in the Community in our Fall 2021 session, please get in touch: [universityinthecommunity@gmail.com](mailto:universityinthecommunity@gmail.com)



UitC students take the conversation into the community!



## Dear Elcee

Dear Elcee is a feature in every issue of Learning Curves.  
Send your questions about education, training, careers, jobs to:

Elcee – The WEA of Canada  
157 Carlton Street, Suite 205  
Toronto, On M5A 2K2

*Dear Elcee:*

*I have been hearing a lot on the news about the aging population. I know about all the opportunities that are going to come about in healthcare but have a deep fear of anything to do with blood. As a twenty something trying to make a decision about where to focus my future... are there any career options that I can take advantage of without fainting at the sight of needles?*

*Not into Nursing*

Dear Not into Nursing:

I am like you. As a young girl I certainly considered a career in Nursing until I realised I might have to give someone a needle. I admire people in the healthcare profession but recognise it takes a very special skill set (one which I don't have.). However, I have many retired friends who are now starting second careers in the home healthcare field. They enjoy the flexibility and the opportunity to get involved in the community while supporting older seniors to live at home.

A report from the Fraser Institute published in the *Toronto Sun* in November 2017 stated that "The combination of Canadians living longer with the population bulge of the baby boom generation means seniors are on track to represent 25 per cent of the Canadian population by roughly mid-century compared to less than 15 per cent in 2010."

Will that mean all of the jobs will be in the frontline healthcare industry? There is certainly, already, an increased demand and that is expected to grow. However, this is also a population that is enjoying better health and more activity than previous generations ever knew. In the early 20th century "old age" was considered anything over 50.

It is expected that positions will be opening up to accommodate a wealthier, more active aging population. the travel industry will see a boost in guided trips, cruise lines and bus

tours. There will also be a greater need for construction work in home renovation and improved accessibility. Industrial design will also require experts in designing products that will accommodate people who may be dealing with decreased mobility and function.

In the healthcare industry, we are seeing a greater demand for Activation Coordinators, Patient Advocates and Family Liaisons. The pharmaceutical industry will be seeking people for research and production. Massage Therapists, Hearing specialists, Physiotherapists are also specialities that will see growth as a result of an aging population.

Have a look around and do a little research. When choosing a career, don't only look at demographic trends. Take into account what your interests are. Ensure that you get a strong basis in your education and keep your mind open to new opportunities to learn and grow!

*Dear ELCEE is written by Deborah Noel,  
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Send her your questions.*

*We value your opinion. Please let us know what you think about this column. Send comments to [learningcurves@hotmail.com](mailto:learningcurves@hotmail.com).*



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