

LEARNINGCURVES

CONTINUING EDUCATION | JOB TRAINING | LIFELONG LEARNING

PUBLISHING SINCE 1999

MICROCREDENTIALS THE NEXT “BIG THING” IN ADULT LEARNING



**BY CARTER
HAMMETT**

We're living in a culture that's "credentials crazy." These days you literally need to be certified to place bags of potato chips on a shelf (it's called a food handling certificate.)

Having said that, It's always a good idea to keep abreast of industry trends while looking into your crystal ball and determining what skills will be needed during the next phase of your career. That's one of the reasons why professional development (PD) is so important. It's adult education that should—but often doesn't—transfer back into the workplace.

PD not only builds on your existing knowledge base, it also increases your confidence, credibility and helps you become more agile as you adapt to the rapidity of workplace and industry changes.

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RESUMES: OBSOLETE OR STILL REQUIRED?

BY LISA TRUDEL

The answer to this question depends on your occupational target. According to recent surveys and labour market reports, the Canadian workplace is at a crossroads with hiring practices. For example, if you are seeing employment in an occupation where there is a labour shortage such as a Server, Security Guard, or Cleaner, you might not even require a resume. Many workers are securing these jobs without the traditional resume. On the other hand, occupations such as Financial Services Managers and Marketing Professionals, require a customized cover letter, resume and LinkedIn Profile.

In an article published online in the Fall of 2021, Hisayuki Idekoba, the CEO of Recruit Holdings who owns Indeed and Glassdoor, stated that "resumes are outdated and should be replaced". He advised that despite many companies struggling to find qualified staff, many small and medium sized businesses are still recruiting the way they did a decade ago which is by asking to submit a resume. He stated that "the current labour shortage is a chance to move away from a resume-profile culture

and resumes could be replaced with questions and assessments to see how a job seeker would handle specific tasks required by the role".

This type of recruitment and redesign of hiring practices is already happening in some sectors and for some occupations. For example, companies including Scotiabank, Deloitte and OLX Group use an assessment style recruitment. They use Plum which is an assessment developed in partnership with leading researchers at Central Michigan University. Plum has proven to be reliable for revealing human potential, advancing diversity talent, and selecting candidates who fit the role. Other pre-employment assessments include Caliper, Predictive Index, eSkill, TestGorilla, Berke, and Criteria. These are personality tests which focus on measuring natural strengths, potential to succeed, approaches to communication, social interaction and problem solving.

What does this mean for the job seeker? If you are seeking employment of any kind, still be prepared with a resume that will pass "applicant tracking systems" yet also be ready to complete online assessments. These could be

personality assessments, or tests in numerical reasoning, verbal interaction, situational judgement, or a standard typing speed test.

In order to be prepared, start by understanding why you are being tested. Employers administer testing and assessments to learn specific results so they can decide if you match the position you are applying to. It might not seem fair that hiring conclusions are based test results however these assessments and tests are part of many recruitment processes, so it better not to be surprised if you are asked to complete one, or two, or more.

One of the reasons these assessments are becoming mandatory is due to the fact that over 50% of candidates lie on their resumes, at least according to the Society of Human Resources Management. Another reason is that positive references can be fabricated, and the traditional in-person interview or even the common Zoom interview, can only provide a quick snapshot of who a candidate really is. Assessments provide a valuable extra piece to the hiring equation and ultimately reduces recruiting costs.

Future forecasts and trends might state that the workplace will move away from the current resume-profile culture, yet it is likely that resumes will not become obsolete just yet and will still be required for the next few years. So, have your resume and LinkedIn Profile ready if you are looking for employment. However also be alert to the reality that many companies will continue to find creative ways to widen the way they search for new staff. There are many flaws in the resume-only approach and pre-employment assessments help to strip away bias and reveals the potential that employers want to consider when hiring and retaining talent.

To find out more about resumes, cover letters, LinkedIn, and career planning issues contact your local Employment Ontario Career Centre and find out if you meet the criteria to use their free services.

This article was written by Lisa Trudel, Career Specialist with Achève (pronounced "achieve"). You can contact Lisa at ltrudel@achev.ca



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ADAPTING WORKPLACE TRAINING FOR A COVID WORLD



BY SHAHINA SULEMAN

You probably won't find many people who disagree with you when you say that good workplace skills are a necessity. However, few people realize exactly how much goes into effective workplace training and curriculum. Throw a pandemic into the mix, and suddenly you have a brand-new set of challenges!

This is exactly what we faced at PTP Adult Learning and Employment Programs in 2020. Our Elevate program seemed to be well in hand, and our students were thriving. Then, like the rest of the world, we found ourselves facing a difficult choice: give up on Elevate completely until the pandemic subsided or recreate the program, essentially from the ground up, in a very short time frame.

One thing I knew for sure was that I could not bring myself to sacrifice the many benefits Elevate students got from the program. Any alternative we created would have to somehow provide equal value. Thus began our journey to a new, digital curriculum.

Elevate: a new path to workplace essential skills

Originally, Elevate was a ten-week, face-to-face program preparing entry-level workers to thrive in the food and beverage industry. We covered a lot of ground, from practical, how-to-do-the-job knowledge (preventing foodborne illness, following good manufacturing practices, staying safe in the workplace) to employability skills that made it possible for individuals to take the wheel of their own career paths. (In other words, how to get—and stay—meaningfully employed.)

The value of soft skills in these training sessions cannot be underestimated. While industry-specific knowledge is invaluable, the ability to manage time, plan tasks, problem solve on the spot, and communicate effectively is what takes “job potential” to “career potential.”

But then...COVID

When it became clear that in-person training would no longer be possible for quite some time, I found myself needing to use the same soft skills I'd been fostering in my students. In addition to creating a digital curriculum for the very first time, we were having to adapt and find equivalencies for an existing, heavily interpersonal framework. All while maintaining an equally educational and worthwhile experience.

I found it invaluable during this time to invest in my own education. I enrolled in Online, Together, a six-week course that gave me irreplaceable knowledge and confidence I desperately needed to formulate and deliver the new, virtual Elevate curriculum.

Online, Together also gave me food for thought on creating a digital framework

using a trauma-informed lens. This time was not easy; at a certain point I was leading class in the morning, only to switch hats in the afternoon and become the student again. It was true on-the-go learning, and I found myself making adjustments to certain aspects of Elevate in real time, based on new ideas that popped up in my student brain.

In addition, I also had to understand and develop new teaching materials and assessments to align with Canada's new Skills for Success framework. There was a lot of coffee involved!

Key components for success

As our first digital course ended, I found a few things to be vital to my students' success in the new version of Elevate:

- Setting clear expectations at the beginning of the course helped them stick to the schedule.
- Keeping the learning process enjoyable (i.e. not boring) helped them to stay engaged.
- Emphasizing personal ownership of their experience boosted self-confidence. That meant giving them a certain level of responsibility and autonomy they wouldn't necessarily see in an in-person setting, but they absolutely rose to the challenge.

It's also important to remember that in the Canadian workforce, there are sometimes cultural aspects at play that can't be ignored. Workers coming from other countries may be used to different social norms. Looking your employer in the eye at the first meeting, for example, seems like common sense to the average Canadian. However, some cultures see this as a sign of disrespect. Workers from those cultures, without the help of a

skills trainer, might go into an interview looking only at the floor and be perceived as rude, hurting their chances at landing the job. This is just one of many examples!

Lessons learned

On reflection, the experience has only reaffirmed my belief that there is a deep need for essential skills in every professional setting. Collaboration, innovation, problem solving, and communication all play essential roles in a successful career. Getting a job is one thing, but maintaining the right attitude and adapting oneself to the winds of change are the keys to meaningful, sustainable employment.

I also saw something unexpected: my students embraced the new way of learning. There was anxiety and discomfort for some at the beginning, but their competency of digital skills visibly grew, and their self-confidence grew as a result. I learned that simply by believing in them and providing (lots of) comfort and encouragement, I could give them the boost they needed to take on new challenges. As a result, they felt empowered to ask questions and take initiative when needed.

The Elevate program is such an amazing training, and I'm forever grateful to PTP for my part in it. Workplace skills, both practical and soft, are a means of opportunity, economic stability, and the potential for meaningful employment that leads to sustainable career paths. Now I also have the honor of offering my students digital skills they may not have learned elsewhere, along with an experience that builds their accountability and self-confidence in new and unexpected ways.

LC

ptp Adult Learning and Employment Programs

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LEARNINGCURVES

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THE WORKERS' EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

MICROCREDENTIALS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Employers also benefit from PD. How? Good people leave bad situations. Good employees hanker to build and expand existing skill sets so allowing PD to feed hungry workers, helps create satisfied workers thereby increasing retention rates. Employees who leave can be quite expensive for an employer to replace, so it makes good business sense to keep those employees happy.

Microcredential programs

If you haven't heard of these short-term PD programs yet, you will. The Ontario government has invested substantial dollars into these short-term courses which are already being developed and promoted around the world.

A new partnership between youth employment agency First Work and the Ontario government is granting free "licenses" to access over 16,000 LinkedIn Learning courses that will enable learners to upskill their credentials while looking for work. Likewise, people already employed will be able to add learning credentials to their skill sets as well. Heads up though: this agreement expires at the end of March 2022, so if you're interested in taking advantage of this offering do it sooner rather than later.

But Canada has yet to determine a precise definition for microcredentials, but there are some specific characteristics this form of learning shares with each other, including:

- A short-term learning program

focused on developing a narrow range of skills and competencies

- Competencies are demonstrated in terms of skills or behaviours and vary across microcredentials.
- Quality is guaranteed because of peer and industry review
- Microcredentials are industry-recognized. Many of these courses are either designed in tandem with subject matter experts or based on requirements from that organizations are looking for.
- The courses are stackable. This means they can be "stacked" to create an eventual qualification. They are also modular. This is especially true in Ontario (as of this writing) that the qualification will appear on a learner's college or university transcript.
- Microcredentials are personalized to meet the individual learner's needs.
- They are shareable. Thus, a finished course can be placed in a digital wallet or an e-portfolio that can be shared with your employer.

Microcredentials are not traditional online classes or time-based. They are not even necessarily about acquiring knowledge. Rather, they're about applying that knowledge through mastered evidence of a particular skill that can be demonstrated.

A report by the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) published in

May 2021, revealed that over half of Ontario's postsecondary institutions were already offering microcredentials. Further, 86 per cent of industry professionals said they would be open to partnering with community groups or industry companies to create microcredentials.

Included in the report are the ranked outcomes of microcredentials by all respondents. For postsecondary respondents, the top five included: industry-aligned, short, based on common definitions, competency-based and stackable.

The courses can be delivered entirely online, in-person or through a blended format.

This is also an opportunity for Massive Open Online Course (MOOCs) providers to step into the fray. Among these, Udacity, FutureLearn and edX offer over 900 microcredentials. A personal favourite is Udemy which offers a plethora of courses from customer service to Cognitive Behavioural Therapy.

Professional associations like the Institute of Management Accountants and The Society for Human Resource Development also offer their own certifications.

In Canada, all credentials are posted to a learner's e-portfolio and, once posted, are "owned" by the learner. In Canada, all college and university registrars have agreed in principle to move to digital credentials using the platform developed by Digitary, a blockchain platform developed in Ireland.

If a skill or competency becomes out of date, for example, a new way of undertaking a specific process or competency becomes standard, it's possible for the issuer to revoke that credential. For example, when the guidelines for CPR changed in 2010, a digital CPR certificate issued before that date could be given an expiry date requiring the holder to update their skills and competencies.

Finally, employers are interested in your commitment to ongoing learning, demonstrable skills as well as skills-based evidence over degrees. In fact, in a study conducted by U.S.-based Northeastern University, indicated that 55 per cent of all respondents saw microcredentialing eventually reducing the emphasis currently placed on degree-based hiring. Several companies, including Google, EY, Costco and Home Depot no longer consider degrees as a major component of the hiring process.

Thus, microcredentialing is perceived as forming a substantial part of the future of work while improving access to the workforce for many, among them, workers with disabilities.

For more information on free LinkedIn Learning courses, visit: First Work x LinkedIn

Carter Hammett is the Manager of Employment Services with Epilepsy Toronto. He can be reached at carter@epilepsytoronto.org

LC

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Adults learners, tell your loved ones what would help you learn.

LEARNINGCURVES

Reprinted from Cupe Facebook page

Congratulations to Terri Preston, this year's winner of the National Literacy Award recognizing a member or group of members who have promoted workplace literacy and clear language.

Terri Preston has been a CUPE member for 32 years. Every day, she works not only to teach English as a second language, but also as an activist with CUPE 4400, promoting clear language in our communication with members. She strongly believes that lifelong learning and community education should be a priority for our union and for Canada.

Terri Preston is a Vice President of Local 4400 of CUPE

CUPE 4400 has been a strong supporter of Learning Curves since the beginning in January 1999. Congratulations to Terri and Thank You for your support over many years.



TERRI PRESTON

2021 recipient of
CUPE's National
Literacy Award.

*Lauréate 2021 du prix
national Alpha du SFCP.*



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

Learning Curves along with many of its partners in education and community services, has been affected by COVID-19. Our Winter issue drop-sites continue to be affected. Unfortunately, we cannot effectively cover our usual distribution of the paper: a print run of over 16,000 located at over 650 sites in Toronto and the GTA.

We would be happy to send you hard copies of the Fall issue or drop them off. Simply contact us at learningcurves@hotmail.com.

We thank all our readers, and our advertisers without whose support Learning Curves could not have existed for the past 20+ years.

Look for us in all the usual places as the province opens up. Many of our back issues are online at www.learningcurves.org

LEARNINGCURVES



Delivering Learning Curves leads me to many a discovery. Recently was this Chart UTSC Library Makerspace, all of this is available to you, posted outside the Library. UTSC is the University of Toronto Scarborough Campus

So I started my web search. The UTSC Library, notes "The Makerspace supports the UTSC Library's core values by offering specialized services to the UTSC community that foster knowledge creation through access to emerging technologies."

In the list of equipment available, there was a Singer sewing machine. Well I thought I know how to use that being in my 75th year. We learned how to operate that in Home Economics class. Others listed in this chart I would need help.

In a listing of workshops listed on the Makerspace newsletter which are all offered online there were the following:

Introduction to 3D Printing

Attendance is mandatory for users interested in accessing the 3D printers.

Introduction to 3D Design.

Then there were workshops I had no idea about.

Introduction to WEVIDEO

WEVIDEO is a cloud-based editing platform that allows you to create digital productions such as videos, podcasts, and presentations.

Arduino Basics

Now I had to refer to Wikipedia that told me the following. Arduino is an open source hardware and software company, project, and user community that designs and manufactures single board microcontrollers and microcontroller kits for building digital devices.

Introduction to Stop Motion

I went to Wikipedia again that told me the following. Stop motion is an animated film making technique in which objects are physically manipulated in small increments between individually photographed frames so that they would appear to exhibit independent motion or change when the series of frames is played back. Any kind of object can thus be animated.

Have a look at the equipment available on Makerspace. Access to these devices is only open to UTSC students, teachers and staff.

However what you find at one institution is often at another. Ask where you take your courses.

UTSC Library Makerspace

All of this is available to you!

| | | |
|---|--|--|
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Kathleen Wynne

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‘Valuable, enriching, and just plain fun’ — Grad students teach philosophy of emotions to community members

By Petra Dreiser, *Reprinted from the UofT Faculty of Arts & Science website*

On November 18, Daniel Munro will likely feel the same elation and relief as thousands of other University of Toronto students that day: they are graduating. In Munro’s case, with a PhD in philosophy, earned through years of coursework and a dissertation titled “Imagining the Actual,” supervised by Professor Jennifer Nagel. Munro was, in fact, the first student to defend his thesis in (masked) person at the School of Graduate Studies following pandemic lockdowns — and he did so masterfully.

Laser-focused as he may have been on completing this final step of his graduate career, Munro in the summer of 2021 still found time for another adventure: together with fellow philosophy doctoral student Zach Weinstein, Munro taught a summer course at University in the Community (UitC), a free-of-charge, adult, liberal arts/civic engagement outreach program in Toronto that offers courses in the humanities to people whose life circumstances may have limited their access to higher education.

The idea to step outside traditional modes of teaching first came to the two friends in the professional development seminar that forms part of their graduate program: both were looking for ways to see their field of study applied to everyday people’s lives, for alternative “ways of approaching and sharing philosophy,” as Weinstein put it.

University in the Community

UitC, founded in 2003 as an initiative of the Workers’ Educational Association of Canada, “aims to foster informative, stimulating conversations that respect participating students’ diverse backgrounds, education, and opinions,”

in the words of its current coordinator, Joanne Mackay-Bennett. It seemed like the perfect fit.

“From the beginning, Joanne and UitC welcomed us with enthusiasm and openness,” Munro says; “it felt inspiring.”

To accommodate their busy schedules, the two philosophers suggested teaching a four-week summer course instead of a full semester and pitched three topic options to their future students. After a year of pandemic and political turmoil, the approximately 30 students, ranging in age from 16 to 80-something and hailing from a wide range of professional and geographical backgrounds, knew what they wanted to talk about: “The Role of Emotions in the World.”

Munro and Weinstein felt excitement at the opportunity, but also a bit of trepidation: the course they had designed — focusing, after an introduction, on emotions in politics, emotions in science/knowledge acquisition, and emotions in personal relationships — depended heavily on active discussion. How would that work on Zoom? How would they manage to co-teach, something they had never done? Would students find the short, popular philosophy texts they had chosen engaging?

They need not have worried. “Students took everything we threw at them and ran with it,” Weinstein enthuses. Students talked, listened, and, over time, began using the philosophical tools their teachers had introduced to them to think about their lives and re-assess past experiences. “It was really exciting,” Munro says.

In fact, the only genuine problem in class became time-management — sessions regularly went over by twenty minutes and, according to Mackay-Bennett, continued on long afterwards,

in phone calls, emails, or text exchanges.

Ralyma Marquez, a medical doctor who practiced palliative care in Venezuela and just completed her secondary English credits at City Adult Learning Centre, described the course as “a gift,” leaving her reflecting on how emotions “intervene in everything we do and decide,” even in realms we might not consider “emotional.” Ebrahim Mohamud, a 16-year-old high school student, praised his instructors’ deftness at “accommodating students at all levels,” and said the course “served as a catalyst for my life-long endeavour to investigate the realm of philosophy.” Another student, the community advocate Robert Thoen, even called into a class to participate in the debate from his sickbed in Mount Sinai Hospital (he has since recovered fully).

Both Weinstein and Munro came away from the experience motivated and “just happy. During a really stressful time in my life, this course proved the bright spot of the week,” claims Munro.

What’s Next?

The UitC course also changed them as teachers and thinkers: Munro has learned that the abstraction and thought experiments so beloved by philosophers have their limits, and that starting with people’s lived experience can enrich discussion and understanding. The classes left Weinstein feeling freshly grounded in his discipline, seeing that it could and did have impact beyond the halls of academia, encouraging community by stimulating thoughtful conversation.

In this way, a project like UitC highlights the strong and reciprocal relationships between the university and the surrounding community — both

learn from and broaden each other’s perspectives.

Would the two philosophers do it again? “It’s definitely on the horizon,” says Weinstein, though no concrete plans exist just yet. He wants to concentrate on finishing his dissertation project, while Munro will spend his first months as a newly minted PhD doing postdoctoral work at U of T.

Either way, they agree: every graduate student, if they can find the time, should endeavor to teach at UitC or an organization like it. “It’s valuable, enriching, and — we cannot stress this enough — just plain fun!”



Headshots of Daniel Munro and Zach Weinstein
Daniel Munro and Zach Weinstein taught a summer course at UitC — a program that takes post-secondary education into the community.



UitC coordinator Joanne Mackay-Bennett and Ralyma Marquez, a medical doctor who practiced palliative care in Venezuela.



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For almost 75 years, JVS Toronto has had a single mission – to help job seekers find meaningful employment. This non-profit organization offers free career building and job search support across Toronto and York Region. They understand that employment is not just about a paycheck. It is also about the way work contributes to society and overall well-being by providing meaningful focus for our lives. Work contributes to physical, emotional, and mental health.

As a multi-service agency with general and population-specific programming, JVS Toronto's Employment Specialists support job seekers from all backgrounds and situations, employers from all sectors, and students in primary, secondary and post-secondary education. They provide employment services to individuals with disabilities, newcomers to Canada, at-risk youth, mature workers, the unemployed and underemployed.

When you register with JVS Toronto for Employment Services, you are assigned an Employment Specialist who will help you along your job search journey. Some of the resources that job seekers receive are:

- Resume and cover letter assistance
- Job interview coaching and mock interviews
- Individual career counselling and exploration
- Exclusive job search skills workshops
- Job fairs, info sessions and networking events
- Direct connections to employers

Every Individual Has Opportunities for Employment

With the onset of COVID-19, JVS Toronto worked rapidly to adapt to the needs of a changing labour market and provided support to almost 16,000 individuals in 2020. They created new workshops and training programs to equip those affected by job loss with the skills needed to rejoin the workforce, and hosted virtual job fairs that connected close to 2,500 job seekers directly to employers in a time of mass layoffs and increased isolation.

Despite the profound transformation of the economy and labour market, 87% of JVS Toronto clients served last year, either found work or returned to school/training. One such client was Levy, who was working at a job he enjoyed when COVID-19 hit. His was one of the 300,000+ jobs lost in Ontario as a result of the pandemic. Levy says, "They kept me motivated and provided me with the lead for the job I got. I am comforted knowing [JVS Toronto is] there if I need services in the future. I would recommend them to anyone!"

Supporting Newcomers to Canada

JVS Toronto has been providing customized employment support for newcomers to Canada since its inception. They understand the challenges newcomers face when finding their first job in Canada, from a lack of Canadian experience, to language and cultural barriers. JVS Toronto's Newcomer Employment Services include industry-specific workplace communication and Enhanced Language Training (ELT) programs, focused job search support, advice on writing a Canadian-style resume, and Bridge Training programs designed to help internationally trained immigrants find employment in the field they were trained in.

Last year, 5,571 new clients originating from 137 countries pursued their vision of a career in Canada with JVS Toronto's support. One such client was Yvonne, a Senior Architect from Hong Kong. Yvonne participated in IPLAN (Immigrant Professional Leveraging Architectural Knowledge for New Opportunities), a Bridge Training program for internationally trained architects. Yvonne told JVS Toronto that "As an internationally trained professional, landing a job is not easy without an understanding of the local workplace culture." Through the IPLAN bridge training program, Yvonne updated her knowledge of local architectural standards and secured several job offers. Today she is employed as an Architectural Designer at one of Toronto's premier design firms.

Maximizing Potential for People with Disabilities

Included in their highly-specialized employment services, JVS Toronto offers programming specifically for individuals with learning disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), developmental disabilities, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), mental health and other challenges. These intensive programs combine a mix of pre-employment preparation and on-the-job coaching that help job seekers understand their strengths and challenges with the intent to achieve and retain meaningful employment.

Last year, 165 clients were served through disability and inclusion-based programming such as the ASD Job-Readiness Program. Oxana, a recent graduate of the ASD program, went from precarious contract-based temporary jobs to full-time employment in Office Administration and reports that, "Thanks to JVS Toronto, I have a knockout resume and cover letter. I found a job I enjoy and I am happy at. It really feels great."

Finding the Path to a Career You'll Love

Career counselling at JVS Toronto helps people identify their interests, skills, personality and values to build a clear picture of what a fulfilling career would be. Through a Career Assessment Profile, information about specific job and career paths, and the resources and tools needed to make informed career choices, participants are able to identify three career options that would best match that individual and develop an action plan with the assistance of a trained Employment Specialist like Zohar Gilula. Zohar has been a Career Counsellor for over 20 years ago. She conducts vocational assessments and career counselling with a diverse variety of clients. She knows that, "Identifying your passions and strengths are the first step in a journey to meaningful employment."

JVS Toronto has 9 locations across Toronto and York Region. Interested job seekers can get started by registering at www.jvstoronto.org/new-clients, calling 416-787-1151, or emailing services@jvstoronto.org.

As a non-profit, charitable organization, JVS Toronto relies on funding from federal, and provincial and municipal governments, as well as generous donors. Donations can be made at www.jvstoronto.org/donate, by phone at 416-649-1666, or at donations@jvstoronto.org.



This is Nick

Nick wanted a clear vision for his career and his future. Today, he is working as a Floral Designer.

"Identifying Nick's passions and strengths was the first step in his journey to meaningful employment." - Nick's Career Counsellor



Meet Yvonne

Yvonne had a vision of a new life in a new country. Now, she is working as an Architectural Designer.

"As an internationally trained professional, landing a job in Canada is not easy without an understanding of the workplace culture."



This is Kristina

Kristina had a vision of a better life for herself and her child. Today, she is a Marketing Account Representative.

"It was hard for me to find a job because of my past. Everyone looked at me as just a case number. JVS Toronto actually helped me."



Say Hello to Levy

Levy's vision of the future did not include unemployment. Today, he is working as a Customer Service Representative.

"I am comforted knowing you're there if I need your services in the future. I would recommend JVS Toronto to anyone!"



Say Hello to Oxana

Oxana had a vision of a stable job she found fulfilling. Now, she is an Office Clerk at a construction company.

"Thanks to JVS Toronto, I have a knockout resume and cover letter. I found a job I enjoy and am happy at. It really feels great."

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION**MOTIVATIONAL QUOTES TO ENCOURAGE LEARNING**

“Difference can be challenging. If you have a homogenous group of people who all think alike, it’s easier to reach a comfortable consensus. Diversity means including people with different perspectives, different experiences, different opinions, and perhaps different working styles or expectations. The companies that succeed in their diversity initiatives do a good job of managing those differences and creating a harmonious whole.”

- Sheryl Sandberg, American Business Executive
and first woman to serve on Facebook’s Board of Directors

“Diversity is having a seat at the table.
Inclusion is having a voice. Belonging is
having that voice heard”.

-Anonymous

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1. We are the only community newspaper dedicated to adult learners in Toronto and the GTA. One in every five adults participates in adult education.
2. We have over 600 distribution points including all Toronto and GTA libraries as well as schools, colleges, universities, community programs and employment resource centres, apprenticeship offices and many neighbourhood, community and recreation centres and other sites.
3. Our readers are new Canadians, youth returning to school, working and unemployed people trying to upgrade or change careers, seniors, employment counsellors, teachers, and employers.
4. Our editorial is informative and insightful - profiling programs and learners and government policy for adult learning. Our articles are posted and handed around.
5. We offer online ads and our rates are very affordable

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‘Morning sun never lasts a day’

By Jocelyn Wensjoe

Photo by Paolo Bendandi on Unsplash

What does it look like to find a best friend for life in a 70-year-old woman? Might sound boring to some of you but to me, it is anything but that. I met her almost immediately after my birth, she would tend to me when mother and father dearest were too tired after a long day of work and parenting. Without a complaint, she would lift me up and swirl around when I was a babbling toddler very excited to play, and rock me back and forth to sleep when I was a cranky infant who wouldn’t stop crying because of summer heat. I remember the times of violent nights, where thunder, lightning, and merciless rain would hit the house with no respite, it was no less than a dreadful sight, but her fragile arms around me, holding me closer to her bosom and relaying all the valiant already told stories yet again not only helped me to believe in fantasies but also got me through the night’s insanity.

She is fondly known for her bedtime narratives, she had the knack of describing even the hardest of the incidents and experiences in a way that would leave my sister and me in utter admiration and happiness. She is not a great storyteller but is an avid narrator, every night as we were tucked into bed by father, we would slowly crawl next to her as lights were out and whisper “Ammama, why don’t you tell us the story of how your sister was taken away by a monkey”? she would conclude her anecdotes with a grin leaving it for us to think if the story was real or fabricated, it was our amusement hour, even though it was a time-bound activity it felt never lasting in a good way.

I began spending more time with her than my sister who is 4 years older than me, school kept my sibling busy while I had no restrictions and commitments, guess that is a perk of being the youngest in the family. As I grew, I found my horizons expanding and she would nurture that free spirit in me. I began understanding what phrases like ‘Be curious all the time’, ‘Find what makes you happy’ and ‘Embrace the child in you’ meant, it meant only one-word ‘fun’ and nothing else. I was exposed to a plethora of cinemas by her, it wasn’t surprising because she enjoyed being immersed in tales. Looking at the actors on screen, I would try to recreate their style which would always go haywire and my stylist would be my septuagenarian best friend. She had this obsession with colour red, any dress, sock, hair band, bracelet she picked for me had to be in shades of red.

Once in a while, I would have play dates with her exclusively on weekends where I would line up all my Barbie dolls and teach them how to apply nail polish and she would be my saloon lady but the color of nail polish remains red. When I enquired why red, she would say “Red is such a happy colour, it’s like the show stopper”, even though she never learned how to apply nail polish in her younger days, she took up the challenge for me. Mother says she was that kind of woman who thrived in difficulty which I only got to know later in life.

I recall some more snippets of our friendship distinctively to this date, one fine afternoon while she prepared lunch for me I slowly snuck into one of the cubicles in a showcase in our family room and sat still as a statue, I let her find me, eventually, after realizing what I was up to, she would walk up to me with a grin to ask “Who are you little girl?”, to which I would reply “I’m the god you love the most, so please me with good lunch and snack” she would laugh out loud and bring me the yummiest food she made, that was our lunch routine until I grew tall and would not fit into that space anymore. I would find ways to entertain her, to keep her by my side all the time, she on the other hand would do the same, we were the perfect duo. There are innumerable activities she did for me just to see me excited and to keep the child in me from fading as we lived in fast-paced city life.

‘Morning sun never lasts a day’ they said but that’s untrue when one is in Antarctica, around the summer solstice, under ideal conditions sun is noticeable 24 hours a day, I was hoping my best friend would be the same, my childlike heart was not ready to let go of my dearest friend, my grandmother, my always companion, nevertheless I was wrong. Old age got to her and just like that she vanished from our lives “At least she suffered less and went away peacefully” exclaimed mother when I was in tears but I was not ready to accept that. I was compelled to dig deeper into her life because when she was with me, it was all about me, my games, my silly tantrums, I felt selfish, I wanted people to cherish her as I do, all the very little I knew about her past life and all I could invariably understand as a munchkin was a couple of photo albums with monochrome pictures from rural India. She was born in a huge family where money was scarce but not an issue, she grew up with hardships but at the same time cultivated to look into the eye of an adversary with a smile. That made her the

most progressive woman of her times because she did not shy away from marrying a widower not because he was well off and had motherless children to take care of but because she chose it.

She spread her cheer, her love, and her warmth like a fairy godmother, a personified form of red colour. This not only made her my

absolute favorite human being but also made her the most compassionate and strong person who only cared for her kid’s well-being. I bet right now she would be writing similar stories about me because why not? We were the Sherlock and Watson that has a never-ending epic run.

✍

THE WRINKLE EYED, FUNNY CERTIFIED! BY SAMANVITA KRISHNA

A story that comes right from the heart with countless memories that do not depart, a story that puts a smile on my face every morning, a glimpse I would like to share, hope that doesn’t leave you in a maze.

The tales of little me brings back so many treasures beyond the toll of what one could measure, some stupid, some harsh, and some innocent jeopardize, all through childhood, I had a companion who was cute, precious, and delightful, it was my wrinkle eyed, a funny certified grandmother who would rather be called a blessing in disguise just like the heavenly French Fries. A point to be noted it was once quoted “She joins you in your madness, with no protest, a quality that is difficult to harness, maybe that’s what makes her the best!”.

I remember the times of violent nights, where thunder, lightning, and merciless rain hit the house with no respite, it was no less than a dreadful sight, but her fragile hands around me, holding me closer to her bosom and narrating all the valiant already told stories yet again not only helped me to believe in fantasies but also got me through the night’s insanity. Oh! how can I forget the times when I was on a cartoon marathon spree and went on shouting “Wee!! Ammama (grandmother) look at tom run!!! “, she used to laugh at me saying “Why do you get excited seeing a cat my little bumblebee?”. Then were the times when I was her teacher and she was my student, the first word she had learned how to spell was a ‘cat’ because come on, ‘Tom & Jerry’ was only the thing that ran in little me’s mind and I believed I was jerry the mouse, who is a smart little brat.

She was not a great storyteller but she used to narrate her real-life stories which my

sibling and I used to label them in different categories, yet there was this weird aura about her, she used to make us laugh with her expressions and anecdotes, she used to say “You know once a monkey took away my sister, we had to bribe the animal with so many bananas, only then the monkey got her back to us! Our ancestors taught us how to bribe!” she always used to conclude with a grin leaving it for us to think if the story was real or fabricated, hence she was the go-to narrator we preferred. My grandma tales also come with a good amount of good food, the yummy South-Indian pickles, which were her territory to tackle. She made pickles from mango, gooseberry, and lime (many more), which the entire family used to relish during dinner time. To this day I say to mom “Ammama makes it better, wish she was here” to which she replies “I know dear!” with a smile.

Like all good things come to an end, she vanished from our lives as the old age got her, but she would fondly be remembered as my dear friend! But what makes her the most memorable was the fact that I got to know after, that redefined my endearment for her false teeth laughter. She was my mother’s stepmother and did not have kids of her own because she wanted to see us all grow, she spread her cheer, her love, and her warmth like the early morning sun’s glow. This not only made her my absolute favorite human being but also made her the most compassionate and strong woman who only cared for her kid’s well-being.

I bet right now she would be writing similar stories about me because why not? We were the Sherlock and Watson that has a never-ending epic run!

✍

Practical lessons for a musician

Waheed Mufti in conversation with Mina Wong

Several years ago, Waheed (Wayne) Mufti sang for a party where I was a guest. The hosts appreciated his music so much that he stayed for dinner, and entertained us well into the evening. Recently, I found his business card and had a chat with him.

It's wonderful to talk with you after all this time. How have things been for you since that beautiful party in Clarington? Wasn't that a gorgeous place and great party! Things have been all right. I have been singing with Emile, a piano player I met that same year. I also like singing for different audiences. They always push me to be a better musician.

But to pay bills, I stock shelves for a discount store. I ride an old bike to save money on TTC. To scrape by, I rent the tiniest room in a small apartment that already has three other people.

There's no easy career path for freelance singers. What I really want is to study music administration, so I can have a career in the music industry.

That sounds creative and practical. What would you like to do with such a cool education?

Ideally, I want to work in music licensing and publishing. If not, I am open to opportunities big and small, as long as they are about music.

You have obviously thought a lot about this plan. Have you always wanted a career in music?

No. In fact, until last year, I never thought there was full-time work for freelance singers like me.

After high school, I was just looking for work, and ended up singing freelance and hoped to work as much as possible.

Ten years later, I have met people who like my music, and now I also work with Emile whenever he needs a singer for his gigs.

But to be a successful vocalist, I would have to be exceptionally gifted or incredibly connected. Practically, it's not enough just to love music. I need a stable income, too.

That's very sensible of you. Have you always been a practical thinker?

Not really. My folks are practical with strong careers. I'm the only dreamer in the family.

My mother manages an investment company's regional office, and my father supervises transportation for a hardware chain. They don't make millions, but they have been very successful.

My sister, Nala is only a year older, but she has done incredible things in human resources. Right after college, she was practical enough to start low at a tiny firm, but now she is a compliance officer for an electricians' union.

As for me, I have always dreamed about financial success with singing, and also with music in general.

But practically speaking, my success should start with post-secondary training. With only high school education, it's hard to build any career these days.

These are insightful arguments for success. What would your career look like?

Once I start thinking of music as an industry with markets, a lot of dots begin to connect.

With proper education, my work could expand to international publishing and licensing, or to production using creative technology for films, television, education, and many other markets.

My career could be very exciting and terribly busy. The impractical side of me is always tempted to just sing the songs I love, but my practical self says, "You can always customize music for an audience. That's good business sense." "Good business sense" -- that's as practical as any musician can get.

What are some pros and cons of studying music administration?

Lots of things are in my favor if I can show a school that I think about music and business together. I can also apply as a mature student, with ten years' experience as a performing vocalist.

But financially, I will need a student loan, which means being in debt until I have a better income. I will have to meet more people who can give me gigs, and not spend very much for a while.

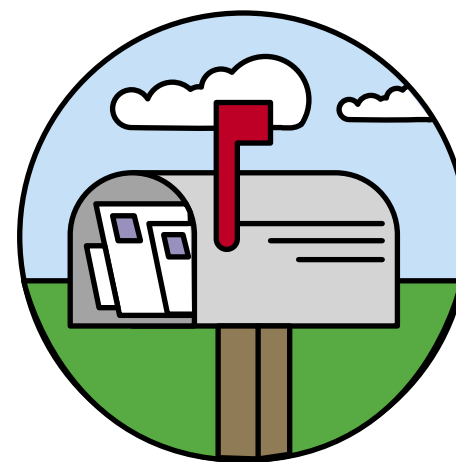
Another difficulty is actually studying business for the first time, but if I can think practically that business is a useful career toolbox, maybe I can learn to like my courses.

The final piece is meeting new demands, including changing technology, more professional development, and whatever else I will need to succeed as a music industry administrator.

You have charted a super-cool, but challenging career with vision and insight. I wish you all the best on this journey, and lots of success with good gigs, and also with audiences who love to hear you sing.

Thank you so much. I will take it slow, think practically, and learn from people who can teach me the skills I need.

LC



Dear Elcee

Dear Elcee is a feature written by Deborah Noel of Learning Curves. Send your questions about education, training, careers, and jobs to deborahjnoel@gmail.com.

Dear Elcee:

I am a 35 year old who has just returned to post secondary education. I am currently in my first year and taking a hybrid of online and in person classes. I have discovered that I seem to do better with online learning. A friend of mine said that it might be related to my learning style but I have no idea what that is. Can you tell me more about it and how it might benefit me in my future studies?

Style Free in Scarborough

Great question! Knowing your own particular learning style can not only answer questions about how you learn best but can also prepare you in designing your learning plan. The term learning style is often used to describe how learners gather, sift through, interpret, organize, come to conclusions about, and "store" information for further use. It is commonly accepted that there are 7 learning styles. They are in a nutshell;

- Visual using pictures, images, and spatial understanding.
- Aural using sound and music. Listening to lectures and podcasts
- Verbal both in speech and writing.
- Physical using your body, hands and sense of touch.
- Logical using logic, reasoning and systems.
- Social learning in groups or with other people.
- Solitary working alone and using self-study.

Most people tend to fall into one or more categories. No one style is better than the other although "traditional schools" tend to primarily focus on using linguistic and logical teaching

methods. That being said, we are seeing a greater incorporation of learning styles in the educational system. I, myself, am definitely a social learner with a touch of verbal and, at times, solitary. However, put me in a group project and I am definitely in my happy place.

There are a myriad of websites that can help you get a picture of what your particular learning style(s) are. Two are;

Free learning styles inventory (learning-styles-online.com)

What's Your Learning Style? 20 Questions (educationplanner.org)

Learn about your learning style! Once you know your learning style or styles, you can incorporate them into your personal study plans to maximise the effectiveness of your studies. Again, I repeat, there is no learning style that is better than the other. Good luck with your studies

We value your opinion. Please let us know what you think about this column. Send comments to learningcurves@hotmail.com.

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