

LEARNINGCURVES

CONTINUING EDUCATION | JOB TRAINING | LIFELONG LEARNING

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If you spend a little time online or have family members or children that spend an exorbitant amount of time in front of a screen of some sort, you will have most likely heard or come across the term ‘Doomscrolling.’

We live in a world where information is constantly at our fingertips, and our relationship with news and social media has evolved in both exciting and troubling ways. A generation ago we received our news once a day around the dinner hour, or roughly 6pm when our parents wanted to learn about what was going on in the world. News was consumed once a day and that was about it.

Nowadays one can’t escape the barrage of ‘news noise’ that permeates our airwaves. Now we have ‘breaking news’, ‘viral news’ and ‘something burgers.’ Yes you read that correctly...‘something-burgers.’ As in ‘there’s a big 12 car something-burger pileup blocking all lanes of the Westbound Highway 401....’

For decades news has been packaged

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MISSED FIRST FALL COURSE STARTS, DON'T WORRY; MANY START DATES STILL OPEN BY WENDY TERRY

Did you miss registering for the fall term's first start dates? Don't worry. There are now many start dates throughout the fall term at universities, colleges, schools, community groups, career colleges, and professional associations. At one time, these providers in the adult education field, for the most part, started fall courses right after Labor Day and started winter courses shortly after New Year's Day. Now, the start dates run throughout a term, so don't feel you missed taking a class this fall.

The Spring Term, which used to start in early April, now has start dates that run into May, June, July, and August, with a summer term blended into the Spring term.

On the first of September, you may have been sick or preoccupied with work or your

kids. The Learning Curves fall issue usually comes out in late August, but a key volunteer, myself, was sick, so we are coming out later in September. So, we thought we would remind you that you have not missed out; there are many start dates throughout the term.

In the Learning Curves Fall 2020 issue, we created a picture of the adult education field of providers (see www.learningcurves.org for back issues of Learning Curves). On page 7 of this issue, we detailed the provision sectors within each university and college with contact phone numbers. It is important to talk to a front-line registration person, as they know the sectors within their provider well, like upcoming start dates, and can help you understand what is available to meet your

needs better than your own website search.

You can book a librarian for an hour in public libraries to help you search. Using the right keyword is critical to finding relevant information. If you are using English as a new language, using the right search words is a challenge. Book a librarian often to help you with these searches.

In the Learning Curves Winter 2021 issue we made a detailed analysis of how many courses had a midterm start date for York, U of T and Ryerson, now Toronto Metropolitan University, continuing education and the colleges, George Brown, Centennial, Seneca, Humber Sheridan and Durham continuing education. The number of mid-term offerings has only increased since this analysis.

The other trend is the offering of online courses. Even the Toronto District School Board Learn4Life Program now offers about a third of its courses online. COVID-19 caused a significant shift to online offerings. During COVID-19, all were provided online, and after COVID-19, there were more and more online offerings.

There is a unique online resource for all 25 colleges in Ontario; there, all online courses for Ontario colleges are listed and offered. Each one has a start date on the first of every month. Ontario Learn in our Fall 2020 issue was listed as www.learontario.ca. now it is www.ontariiolearn.com. You will not find a coordinated website like

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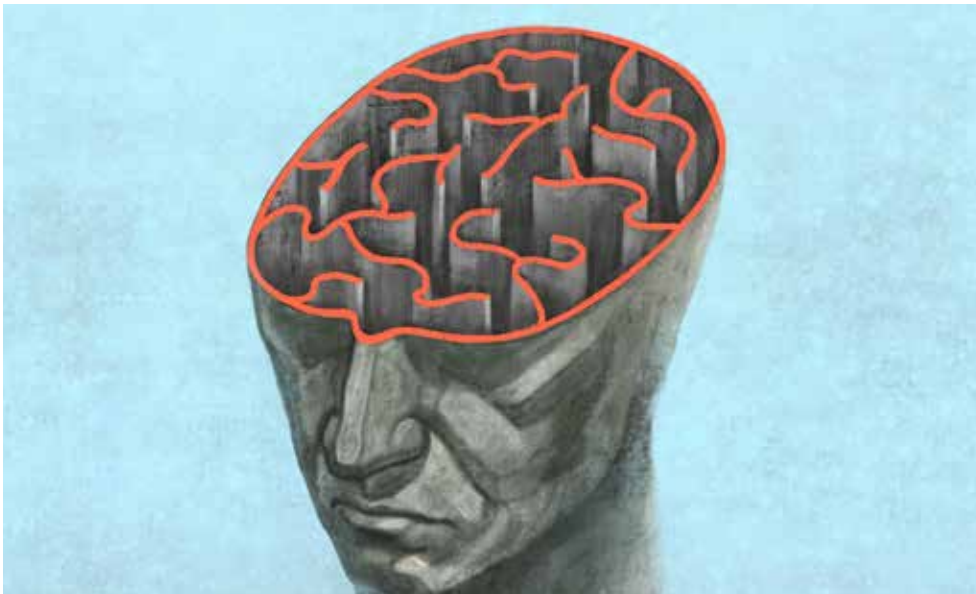
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NAVIGATING THE MAZE: OVERCOMING JOB CHALLENGES FOR NEWCOMERS

BY BRYAN KAYE



Moving to a new country is a thrilling adventure, filled with dreams of new opportunities and a better life. For many newcomers to Canada, the excitement of starting fresh is accompanied by hopes of securing a dream job and improving the well-being of their families back home. However, the journey often comes with unexpected challenges, particularly in the job market.

The Excitement of New Beginnings

Arriving in Canada, you are filled with optimism. The picturesque landscapes, multicultural cities, and warm-hearted people paint a promising future. The idea of working

in a country known for its robust economy and high living standards is exhilarating. You envision landing your dream job, contributing to the Canadian workforce, and sending support back to your loved ones.

The Reality of the Job Search

However, the initial excitement can quickly turn to surprise and frustration. Despite having valuable professional experience and qualifications, many newcomers find it difficult to secure jobs in their fields. The concept of "Canadian experience" becomes a significant barrier. Employers often prioritize candidates with local experience,

making it challenging for skilled immigrants to break into their desired industries. This disconnect between professional experience from back home and the expectations in the Canadian job market can be disheartening. The job search becomes a long walk through a maze of applications, rejections, and uncertainty. It's a common struggle that many newcomers face, leading to feelings of frustration and doubt.

Empowering Yourself with Information

Fortunately, Canada offers a wealth of resources to help newcomers navigate these challenges. Various online databases and information centers across the country provide crucial knowledge to equip you for the job market. These resources offer insights into job openings, market trends, and requirements. Employment services are another valuable resource. These centers provide career development services, including resume building, interview preparation, and networking opportunities. Workshops, mentorship programs, and job fairs specifically designed to help newcomers integrate into the Canadian workforce are available to guide you through this journey.

Taking Action: A Call to Newcomers

As a newcomer, it's essential to leverage these resources to bridge the gap between your professional background and the Canadian job market. Seek out employment services,

attend workshops, and engage in networking events. Take advantage of information centers to gain a deeper understanding of the Canadian workplace culture and expectations.

Improving your qualifications through additional training or certification programs can also enhance your employability. Many institutions offer courses tailored to newcomers, helping you align your skills with market demands. By continuously learning and adapting, you can position yourself as a competitive candidate.

In conclusion, the journey of finding a job in Canada may be longer and more complex than anticipated, but it's not insurmountable. By utilising the available resources and embracing a proactive approach, you can transform challenges into opportunities. Newcomers are encouraged to tap into information centers and employment services to enhance their professional skills and confidently step into the Canadian job market.

Remember, every step taken towards improving your knowledge and skills brings you closer to achieving your dream job and securing a brighter future for you and your family. Embrace the journey, stay resilient, and let your dreams guide you to success in your new home.

This article was written by Bryan Kaye Senfuma, Digital Rights Advocate, Digital Security Subject Matter Expert, Photographer, Writer and Community Advocate. You can email Bryan at: bryantravolla@gmail.com

Adult Continuing Education Programs for the



DURHAM CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Check out the following learning opportunities – Serving Durham Region

www.con-ed.ca

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Adult Upgrading - Literacy and Basic Skills (MLITSD Funded)
Night school, Summer school, E-Learning, Computer Courses
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Oshawa Campus 905 438-0570 & 905-626-6631
Re-engagement Program Oshawa 905-438 0570
Ajax Campus 905-683-7713 & 905-626-6631
Reconnect Program - Ajax Campus 905-666-1146
Whitby Giffard Centre Campus ESL & Linc 905-666-1255
Welcome Centre ESL & Linc 289-481-1336
Adult Upgrading LBS Program 905-438-0570 Ext. 57156
International Languages 906-683-7713
Prior Learning Assessment (PLAR) 905 430-0570 & 905 683 7713

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THE WORKERS'
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EXPLORE, UNLOCK & ACHIEVE WITH VOLUNTEERISM

BY GINNY RANA

Anthony arrived in Canada in December 2023. Having no friends or family in Canada and unable to make a headway in terms of job search, Anthony soon started feeling hopeless and depressed. Faced with rejection, he began questioning his skills and abilities. He was wondering whether he made a mistake in leaving behind a flourishing career and social connections back home.

Lost in this maze of thoughts, one Sunday when he went to the Church, a friendly old lady came up to him and said, “I see you in the Church every Sunday. Will you be interested in volunteering at our Food Bank? We are looking for volunteers,” asked the woman. Anthony consented and soon found himself happily occupied as he helped in meal preparations and managing food bank donations. Within a matter of a few days, Anthony knew almost everyone at the food bank and the Church. Involvement at the food bank reinstated his self-confidence.

In February 2024, the elderly lady came up to Anthony as he was stocking supplies. She said that one of their community partners was looking for a Food Bank Officer to manage food banks in various locations across the city. “I think you will be a good fit. Can I share your contact details with them?” Anthony could not believe what he heard and immediately said yes. Very soon, Anthony found his first paid job as Food Bank Manager. Anthony was thrilled. Working full-time now, Anthony could volunteer only over the weekends at the Church’s Food Bank. But this was a promise he had made to himself – to continue to

volunteer and not forget his little community of friends and acquaintances at the Church.

Anthony is not the only one for whom the experience of volunteering expanded horizons and reined in new opportunities. Many volunteers feel that volunteering has changed their lives for better. The experience of working for a cause and lending your hand to improve lives is uplifting and fulfilling.

Canada has a long legacy of active volunteerism. The country prides itself on a tradition of people who volunteer and serve passionately. Canadian society has a high regard for volunteerism and volunteers are respected for their valuable contributions.

What Are the Benefits of Volunteerism?

There are many reasons why people volunteer. Apparent as it is, many volunteer to help social and environmental causes. Volunteering can help you meet new people, make new connections, and forge lasting relationships. This can be a blessing in disguise especially for newcomers, who get an opportunity to connect with like-minded persons from different walks of life. Volunteering helps you to learn new skills, develop new capabilities, which can become a valuable addition to your existing skill set. As you volunteer, you may pick up technical skills, such as computer literacy, office administration or enhance soft skills such as inter-personal relationships, time management and/or organizational skills. For persons looking to switch careers or sectors, volunteering

can connect with sector-specific skills. For instance, you may be taking a temporary break from work. Volunteering in such cases can help you stay connected to the job market. This way your skills will not become outdated even though you are not working in your field. What’s more, you may even get an opportunity to upgrade your skills. Volunteerism can help keep older adults or those leading retired lives, occupied, and engaged with the job market. Volunteering can lend a new direction and purpose to life. The act of giving back to society can be very rewarding. The sense of social accomplishment can help manage stress and anxiety and maintain overall well-being.

How Can I Volunteer?

Consider your skills, capabilities, and interests. It may be a good idea to pick roles like the ones that interest you so that you can develop your skills while you volunteer. For instance, if you are interested in nursing jobs, you may want to volunteer at a hospital or nursing home. Similarly, if teaching is your passion, you can volunteer at language classes or after-school homework help centres. If you are already working and want to develop a new skill, volunteering can help you branch out as you get a taste of new skills. It is a good idea to keep in mind the time you can devote. Only evenings, weekends or even occasional volunteering, time however small or infrequent, is precious and appreciated. Nelly works full-time and uses time over the weekends to volunteer at a homeless shelter. Another consideration is whether you are a

team player or like to work independently. This can help you narrow on the types of volunteer roles you may like to try. If you are unable to volunteer in person, there are many online volunteer options as well to explore.

Connection to the Job Market

Volunteering can turn out to be your road map to landing your dream job. Not just that, the connections you make can serve as your references. Martha volunteered at Toronto Public Library’s Adult Literacy program. When she applied for a job at Toronto District School Board, she needed references to support her application. Her supervisor at TPL was one of the first references she gave.

Where can I Volunteer?

You can volunteer with non-profits, shelters, museums, libraries, children’s camps, long term care facilities, hospitals, public health clinics, food banks, churches/synagogues—the list is endless. You do not have to travel out of the way to volunteer, just look for organizations within the neighbourhood or even look out for remote volunteer roles.

Just remember that no time or effort is small or unrecognized. Volunteering is time well-spent for a good cause. You may be surprised when volunteering turns your life around. Just give it a shot!

This article is written by Ginny Rana, a Registered Social Service Worker working with and for newcomers in Toronto.

4 IMPORTANT THINGS IN LIFE

BY OSMAN OZSOY



Last August, I visited some refugee camps in Europe. There are journalist friends and students staying there, and people who volunteered for our community and were rich businessmen, but everything was confiscated. I have academic friends who were university professors, and acquaintances who previously held important positions in the judiciary and bureaucracy.

In my meetings with these people, all of whom are university graduates and who had high positions and ample opportunities while in Turkey, four points stood out: The most important thing in human life is freedom. Health and security follow. Having a small economic opportunity to continue one’s life also follows. Democratic countries that accept asylum applications offer opportunities to refugees under these four headings. Many of their needs are met completely until they can hold on to life again.

When the war in Ukraine caused a wave of migration to European countries and North America, I saw, for example, in Amsterdam, some refugees were temporarily hosted on a ship with the comfort of a hotel, due to the need for accommodation arising from the rapid growth of migration. We thank all countries that welcomed these people on behalf of humanity.

Freedom is very important. It is one of the important elements of being human and remaining humane. Freedom is such a thing that when it starts to disappear, people not only lose the courage to voice their thoughts to their surroundings, but also gradually reduce

their inner voice directed towards themselves. People are afraid to think even when they are alone. The sense of self-control also prevents general control based on oppression.

The inhumane events experienced in countries governed by dictatorships are also primarily due to the fact that the administrators have lost their humanity. In such countries, administrators gradually lose their human qualities and become ruthless. Over time, they act very cruelly not only towards people but also towards nature and animals. For example, in recent months, a legal regulation was made in Turkey regarding stray dogs. Then, some municipalities began to mass kill stray dogs. Such brutal images are reflected on social media that one’s heart cannot stand watching them.

An important aspect of journalism is following the news. In the previous issue of Learning Curves (Spring 2024), I shared the story of a 5-year-old girl who fled Turkey with her mother one night, crossed the Evros (Merik) River by boat to Greece, and then sought refuge in Germany. I visited them during my trip to Europe. They faced the same difficulties that all refugees face, but they eventually reunited their families. The father, an academic who was imprisoned for 7 years for his ideas and became a good lawyer, eventually joined the family. This immigrant girl, now 10 years old, was holding her cousin to sleep in her arms when I arrived.

Freedom is like health. Its value is only understood when it is lost. Let’s appreciate freedom and fight for it.

ADULT FRIENDSHIPS

BY SAMANVITHA ORUGANTI

Awkward silences, filler words with long pauses, and helpful use of countless small talks as icebreakers, along with an unusual show of vulnerabilities, are typically how adult friendships begin. Is this a trend for all adults across the board? The mind wonders sometimes.

These friendships may perceptibly look and feel different, but deep down, they resonate with one’s childhood persona, relationships, and sometimes even trauma. Although these early conversations may not be as simple and easy as, “I am taking the same course as you. Do you want to sit together?” or “Hey!” can I join you for lunch?

Instead, they go deep, striking a chord, welcoming, and extending a sense of understanding and empathy. However warm or fuzzy a new friendship can be, it can be a perfect hit-or-miss situation and incredibly tough as an adult than as a child or an awkward teenager.

Maybe it’s all the insecurities with added layers of hesitation and inhibitions, but growing up, forming bonds, and hoping to see them transpire from acquaintance to friendship is a journey filled with optimism, hilarious anecdotes, and occasional heartbreaks.

Samanvitha Oruganti is an avid storyteller who likes narrating stories about people, emotions, and places. She believes our world has innumerable tales, some hidden, some not, but all waiting to be told. She can be reached via email at samanvitha.krishna@gmail.com

HOW TO STAY INFORMED WITHOUT LOSING YOUR MIND

BY ANNA KARLOVA,

In the past, staying informed required effort: picking up a newspaper, turning on the TV, or tuning into the radio. But with the evolution of technology, information now bombards us from every angle. Imagine waking up in the morning with a flood of notifications on your phone. At the gym, TV screens flash images of wars, natural disasters, and crimes. Your break at work offers no respite: instead of watching something light on TikTok, you stumble upon yet another scandal. Conversations with colleagues and family fuel more news about illnesses, divorces, and personal dramas. You're met with targeted ads and world event updates every time you go online. Sound familiar? The volume of news is growing. The news is getting worse. And we feel increasingly anxious and afraid. How can we resist panic and anxiety and avoid drowning in this flood of "news"?

Redefine

To begin with, let's acknowledge that "news" is crafted and delivered to elicit a reaction from us, and an emotional one at that. Skillful word choice, suited to describing events, can influence our perception of the event and even create alternate realities. The effect depends on the professionalism of the broadcaster and the level of trust and engagement from the listener.

In his book *Sleight of Mouth*, Robert Dilts described language patterns that allow for flexibility in communication and the ability to shift beliefs by redirecting attention from one aspect of a situation to another. 'Redefine' is among the most critical tools for wordsmiths and media professionals, and it's more prevalent in our everyday language than we might realize. It involves replacing a word or phrase with another that changes the emotional impact or attitude toward what's being said while leaving the overall meaning intact. As a result, it influences the behavior of the listener or reader. In reality, we do this all the time: renaming, juggling synonyms, swapping labels. But few people can do it consciously and purposefully.

"I wasn't late. I was delayed by traffic."

Propagandists do this masterfully. But for those of us who are not journalists, lawyers, or peddlers of alternate realities—just ordinary consumers of information—the feeling of brain overload from all the interpretations, promises, hopes, and horrors being fed to us from every source is all too familiar. This becomes especially acute in times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

"News?"

We've clung to various YouTube channels, online communities, or TV, eagerly consuming different versions of events, habitually calling these versions "news." We read, post, and discuss countless opinions on events and feel like we're on a roller coaster: excitement, nausea, dizziness, fear, thrill, and then excitement again. This depletes not only our mind and psyche but also our body. Not to mention, it devours a colossal amount of our time and energy.

The term "News" is a misnomer when it comes to the information, we voraciously consume from various sources today. It's not so much 'News' as someone's version of events or desired outcomes.

The word "news" has played a cruel trick on us, exploiting how our brain is wired. It craves novelty (thank you, dopamine!), it needs to "stay informed" to survive, and it seeks something to rely on, believe in, and plan future actions. The brain latches onto the word "news" because it promises a triple reward. But when bombarded by a deluge of versions and interpretations, the brain struggles to find stability. It frantically searches for information that confirms its existing beliefs, hoping to avoid a mental breakdown. We find ourselves in a constant battle of competing narratives.

When we treat every version, assumption, or interpretation in the info war as "news," it's no surprise that, after a while, our poor brain begins to freeze like an overheated computer. Soon after, we're engulfed in apathy, mild depression, exhaustion, and all the associated feelings that

make life feel complex and far from enjoyable.

What Can Be Done?

First and foremost, we must manage our content consumption. Limit the flow of information: important news will find you, while the rest is often just noise, stealing your time. Identify a few trusted sources and topics of interest, and set a time limit for how long you're willing to spend consuming this information.

Think about when and how much news reading is most productive for you. Avoiding consuming news before bedtime can ensure a peaceful and restful night, as reading distressing reports late at night can lead to hours of sleepless worry.

Don't get involved in comments, and definitely don't engage in arguments there. Refraining from comment debates frees you from the cycle of negativity as you keep returning to see what responses you've received, triggering yet another wave of negativity.

Master the art of stopping yourself. The term "doomscrolling" describes the habit of endlessly scrolling through lousy news, sinking deeper into despair. Another tendency is to relish the details of disturbing events. When something hits hard, the urge to find out more takes over, but that's not always necessary.

Remove consistently distressing content from your feed. Sometimes, it seems that everything was calm before, and now there are only maniacs, killers, and terrorists. But the truth is, horrific events have always happened; it's just that information is now readily available. The feeling that everything is worsening arises not because the world has deteriorated but because you know more about it.

What Else Can Be Done?

Psychology has a concept of resilience, built on accepting difficult situations and finding opportunities in them. Resilience is fostered by small, regular actions that help maintain stability, predictability, control,

and influence—even in limited areas.

The key to resilience lies in maintaining routines and creating "safety zones"—spaces where you can feel control and comfort. One method is keeping a journal to track both work and personal tasks, which can help you focus on your life and manage your time more effectively.

Experience the relief that comes from planning. Whether it's for a day, a few days, a week, or even a month, planning helps reduce anxiety by allowing you to anticipate risks, consider how to minimize them, and develop contingency plans if things don't go as expected.

Lastly, don't lose sight of your personal sense of purpose—whether significant life goals or small but meaningful tasks. These provide the strength to overcome difficulties and a reason to persevere. In this context, one of the most inspiring books is by Jewish psychiatrist Viktor Frankl, who survived Nazi concentration camps. His work *Man's Search for Meaning* offers a powerful source of motivation, helping guide the search for meaning and resilience in life.

In Summary

Most of what we call "news" is actually just someone's version of events. We pay for consuming these interpretations with our emotions and personal energy—the fuel of our lives. Identify 2-3 sources you trust as your "news sources," and treat everything else as mere versions. Observe their battle out of intellectual curiosity or a sporting interest, but no more. This will help you keep your sanity and conserve great energy and time for things that truly matter—for your country, people, and, ultimately, yourself. Invest your attention, energy, and time into helping yourself and those who genuinely need it.

This article was written by Anna Karlova, who loves learning throughout her life and has a strong passion for Data Analytics.

MISSED FIRST FALL COURSE STARTS, DON'T WORRY; MANY START DATES STILL OPEN

BY WENDY TERRY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

this for universities, schools, community organizations, career colleges, or professional associations. Each one of these is competing with the other for student enrollment.

It is challenging to see the field of adult education and each provider in it. Youth have school counselors to help them, and they are climbing up a high school ladder to a post-secondary program. Meanwhile, adults are reaching out to a mosaic of adult education providers to find a course or program that meets their current learning needs and has a schedule that accommodates their life commitments, work, family, etc.

Right now, in Ontario, we only have an overall learning service for adults learning English. CLARs, Canada Language Assessment and Referral Services helps

newcomers shop around in a learning field that is new to them, as is their new country.

Note that most ESL programs are continuous intake, as are academic upgrading programs. You start as soon as you register.

Adult learners have universities, colleges, and schools in their minds, and on occasion, they see a community program or a career college but rarely a professional association course. These providers offer courses with varied start dates; some are continuous intakes.

How do you find a comprehensive listing for each one of these three sectors?

For Community programs, google 211Toronto. Then click on the Employment and Training sector. Then choose Work Experience in the subtopics.

For Career Colleges (private schools)

google Career Colleges Ontario. Choose Member, then Member Colleges.

At one time, you could not get credit at a public community college for an equivalent course taken at a private career college. The upsurge in international students has changed this field. Public community colleges have given their curriculum for courses to private career colleges so they can accommodate the upsurge in international students. So, is it easier to transfer a career college credit to a community college program even if you are not an international student? You would think so.

At one time, professional associations were listed in college calendars, so you could see how to become a professional association by taking a college course (see www.learningcurves.org Feb/March—2010 page 6). I was able to

create a table of professional associations in partnership with each college and university. But now, you would have to look at each course description on each of their websites for a professional association affiliation.

Or look up the professional association website to see which educational institute they affiliate with.

Google Professional Associations. From my experience helping students find a listing or professional association, it is best to click on the Wikipedia listing. The Canadian Information Processing Society has a listing of courses they partner with colleges and universities. Most useful, they have a job bank. Employers looking for a person with this professional background will post the job on the CIPS site.

Other professional associations offer their own courses, and most have job banks. It is valuable to join one of these to network with peers who know about jobs that are not advertised. They have events where you can network.

Ready to take a course now? Check out these providers. You will find plenty of choices!

THE DARK SPIRAL OF DOOMSCROLLING

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

and served up as entertainment, and Doomscrolling emerged from this mayhem.

During the COVID crisis, most of us were huddled in our homes finding ways to keep ourselves occupied. Inevitably most of us gravitated towards our electronic devices.

'Doomscrolling' which involves endlessly cycling through negative or distressing content, often on social media or news websites, has become a common habit for many. But what exactly is this phenomena and why does it have the potential to be so harmful?

Doomscrolling is the act of compulsively consuming negative news and/or viewing disturbing content, often to the detriment of one's mental health. Unlike simply keeping up with current events, doomscrolling involves a relentless search for bad news, driven by a mix of anxiety, curiosity, and sometimes, a need for validation of our worst fears. This behavior typically occurs late at night or during periods of heightened stress, such as during a global pandemic or political unrest.

The psychological toll of doomscrolling can be significant. Constant exposure to negative news can accelerate feelings of stress, anxiety, and depression. Our brains are

wired to respond more intensely to negative stimuli—a concept known as negativity bias. This bias means that negative news stories tend to stick with us longer than positive ones, making them more likely to contribute to feelings of helplessness and despair.

Moreover, doomscrolling can disrupt sleep patterns, particularly when it occurs late at night. The blue light emitted by screens can interfere with melatonin production, making it harder to fall asleep. Coupled with the stress from the content being consumed, this can lead to insomnia or poor-quality sleep, further exacerbating mental health issues.

Social media platforms are designed to keep users engaged, and doomscrolling exploits these designs in insidious ways. Algorithms prioritize content that generates strong emotional responses, often pushing negative or sensational stories to the top of your feed. The more you engage with this content, the more the algorithm feeds it to you, creating an echo chamber of distressing information.

In addition to the algorithmic traps, the sheer volume of information available at any given moment can be overwhelming. The 24-hour news cycle, coupled with the

real-time updates from social media, creates a constant stream of information that can be difficult to step away from. It's like watching a never ending train wreck. This overload can lead to 'decision fatigue', where the act of choosing to disengage from the negativity becomes another source of stress.

Recognizing the pattern of doomscrolling is the first step toward breaking free from it. Here are some strategies to help mitigate its effects:

1. Set Boundaries:

Establish specific times of day when you check the news or social media. Limiting exposure, especially before bed, can help reduce the impact on your mental health.

2. Curate Your Feed:

Follow accounts that offer balanced perspectives or share positive stories. Unfollow or mute sources that consistently post distressing content.

3. Practice Mindfulness:

Engage in activities that promote mindfulness, such as meditation or deep breathing exercises. These practices can help reduce the anxiety that drives doomscrolling.

4. Stay Informed, But not Overwhelmed:

Choose a few reliable news sources and

check them once or twice a day. This helps you stay informed without becoming consumed by the constant influx of information.

5. Take Digital Breaks:

Regularly disconnect from your devices to engage in offline activities. Whether it's going for a walk, reading a book, or spending time with loved ones, these breaks can help reset your mental state.

Doomscrolling is a modern manifestation of the ancient human tendency to seek out information, especially in times of uncertainty. However, the relentless focus on negative news in today's digital landscape can trap us in a cycle of anxiety and despair. By understanding the psychological mechanisms at play and implementing strategies to manage our media consumption, we can regain control over our mental well-being and cultivate a healthier relationship with the information that surrounds us.

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

Academic →



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
WOODSWORTH COLLEGE

The Millie Rotman Shime
Academic Bridging Program

Access to Honours Bachelor
of Arts or Honours
Bachelor of Science degree



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Mark Bosworth, Distribution, Learning Curves Newspaper

THANK YOU MARK!

Learning Curves has been published for the past 25 years.

Thanks to many volunteers or a few who are paid way less than they give.

Mark is one of those, he has delivered the Toronto drop sites for the past 18 years. Thank you for all the years of dedication and ensuring our readers have access to the paper.

Thank you Mark.

See www.learningcurves.org for the Winter 2018 issue page 10-11 for a picture of volunteers at our 100 issue celebration.

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사랑의 빛 Light of Love

by KOH Hee Sun 고희선

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외롭지 않아요.
찬란한 태양이 빛나는
아름다운 이 날은,
그대가 있어 더욱 더
눈부시게 빛나요.
오늘도 그대 내 사랑
행복한 시간 속에서,
우리의 소중한 이야기
함께 펼쳐 나가요.

If a light resides within,
It's the glow of your love.
You are always by my side,
Loneliness fades in your presence.
On this glorious sunny day,
Its brilliance is enhanced.
You are my love, an eternal embrace,
Our story will never end.
Together, let's unfold our journey,
In the rhythm of our happiness.
You and I, forevermore in love's dance,
Our spirits will soar.



KOH Hee Sun is a poet and singer songwriter. She brings hope to people and brightens the world with beautiful poems, songs, and stories. She is a member of the Arts and Letters Club of Toronto and Pen International.

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This article is reprinted from the last issue to outline the importance of the Lifelong learning program and to make sure our readers have the change to keep it top of mind.

Friends of Learn4Life: Rallying to Preserve a Vital Adult Learning Program

by Jared Westreich

Friends of Learn4Life is a newly formed group of passionate learners and instructors from across Toronto, united in their fight against the proposed elimination of the TDSB-run general interest and seniors daytime adult learning program, Learn4Life. This program, with its diverse offerings, has become a cornerstone for many in our community.

Last year, I enrolled in a 10-week bicycle repair course, taught by an expert bike mechanic. Each week, we focused on different parts of the bike, practicing repairs on our own bicycles with all the necessary tools provided. Thanks to this course, I now save hundreds of dollars annually by performing my own maintenance. I also took a beginner Spanish class, which was an incredibly enjoyable experience. Practicing with adults of all ages and socializing over beers after class enriched my learning experience and built lasting connections.

In March, TDSB administration presented trustees with budget-balancing suggestions, a challenging task given the provincial funding shortfall in recent years. Among the proposed cuts, one stood out: the complete elimination

of Learn4Life, a program with over a century of history. The rationale was that Learn4Life's costs have exceeded its revenues for several years. Despite the program's small deficit, some argue that all of TDSB's limited resources should focus solely on K-12 students.

However, Learn4Life's general interest classes, covering topics from personal finance and computers to car maintenance, sewing, and the arts, provide an affordable way for Toronto residents to learn, socialize, and stay active. At a time when the cost of living is skyrocketing and loneliness is pervasive, these programs are more essential than ever.

The community quickly rallied in response to the proposed cuts. Over 40 people spoke at a trustee meeting, passionately defending the program. Speakers highlighted how Learn4Life classes enriched their lives: a newcomer shared how a volleyball class helped them integrate into the city; young adults appreciated the affordability of activities which would otherwise be out of reach; seniors emphasized the deep community bonds formed over years of attending the same classes; and a couple revealed that their ballroom

dancing class was a cherished weekly ritual.

Recognizing the value of adult education, the trustees voted to delay the program's elimination until a community impact report is completed in the fall, effectively saving Learn4Life for the 2024-2025 school year.

Those of us who attended the meeting understood that this victory was only the first step. We exchanged contact information and began strategizing on how to ensure Learn4Life's long-term viability. One key initiative is boosting marketing efforts. Despite its impressive offerings, many Torontonians are unaware of Learn4Life. Our plan includes grassroots marketing campaigns ahead of each registration period to raise awareness and attract new participants.

The Learn4Life staff have welcomed our support enthusiastically. This fall, volunteers will distribute brochures citywide, and we'll seek support from MPs, MPPs, and city councilors to include Learn4Life sign-up information in their newsletters.

Beyond marketing, we are advocating for adequate provincial funding for public education. A fully funded school board should

have the flexibility to support programs like Learn4Life, which add immense value to the community. We also call for transparency in Learn4Life's finances, urging the TDSB to share financial details with trustees and stakeholders to identify and address challenges effectively.

Last year's 20% fee increase led to a predictable drop in enrollment. Now, TDSB administration is proposing another fee hike—30% for the general population and over 100% for seniors. This approach will not balance the budget but rather further decrease enrollment and deepen the deficit. Friends of Learn4Life are challenging this plan and working with TDSB to develop alternative solutions to ensure the program's sustainability.

We recognize that there is much work ahead, but we are committed to preserving the benefits of adult education for future generations. If you've ever wanted to learn to cook, sew, prepare your taxes, birdwatch, sculpt, paint, or dance, I highly recommend checking out Learn4Life. Together, we can ensure this invaluable program continues to thrive.

How to Give the Gift of Learning for the Holidays!

Give your loved one

- tuition for a course
- books or a tech gadget for a course
- a coffee gift card for an after class pick me up
- give your loved one time to learn
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- provide a few homemade meals to help save time
- proofread their papers or tutor them in your speciality

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

LEARNINGCURVES

CAN'T FIND THE SUMMER 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 Summer 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 Summer 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



REMEMBERING SAIFUL'S PERSEVERANCE

A SHORT STORY BY MINA WONG

One September almost ten years ago, a mature student studying Practical Nursing was in a psychology class I was teaching. His name was Saiful who always sat in the front row when most students preferred to sit further back.

Since all the students were nurses-in-training, I was curious about Saiful who wasn't only older than his peers, but also more attentive when taking notes in class.

In the second week, I asked Saiful how he was managing college.

After a few blinks, he sighed, "Honestly, I don't know."

Surprised by his uncertainty, I asked if our psychology course was at the right level for him.

"Honestly, it is new, but with many medical information. But honestly, I did not study this back home."

A medical doctor from Bangladesh, he'd hoped to continue his practice in Canada. However, he couldn't believe his English skills were only at par with entry-level jobs, just as he was shocked by his medical credentials needing almost a complete overhaul.

"I will fail the medical board exam. So, ESL teachers at YMCA got me into this nursing program."

I then understood Saiful's situation: after carefully weighing the pros and cons of a medical practice in Canada, he chose nursing as a second career option.

"Back home, I was good doctor, but here, everything is too strict, or too free. I cannot be doctor, only nurse or personal support worker."

I had both empathy and optimism for Saiful's challenges: "It must be very hard to make the choices you've made, but nurses are professionals with a lot of training and decent salaries."

Saiful was earning good marks in core courses such as anatomy and physiology. But he was challenged by psychology, just as he needed extra help with pre-college English taught by a close colleague of mine.

Saiful accepted support from a classmate called William when I asked them to study together. Having adjusted to Canada since Grade seven and now becoming a nurse, William understood Saiful's struggles: "My parents also had difficulties finding jobs when we came here from the Philippines. They had business diplomas but needed to go back to school. It was hard for a while, but they worked for hotels after college, and they're both supervisors now."

Since then, William always sat with Saiful in the front row, and studied with him for all the courses they took together. While William showed Saiful good communication skills on assignments, Saiful had an advantage in clinical sciences and math, and helped William with them.

Soon, Saiful gained a new perspective on his second career. "At first, I did not understand why I must be nurse and not doctor, but now I see nursing needs a lot of study, a lot of knowledge. But I can do it. I want to work in medicine."

William deeply respected Saiful whom he affectionately called "Doctor". "He's hard-working, serious, and helpful. He'll make a great health care professional even if he doesn't become a surgeon."

Toward the end of the semester, Saiful's perseverance in psychology was paying off. Having passed all the tests and assignments in our class, he was preparing for the final exam with William.

With each other's help that semester, both Saiful and William earned good marks in all their courses. But Saiful believed he'd gained much deeper insights into success than just passing courses.

In his own words, after several months in Canada, Saiful and his wife, Anila both wanted to go back to Bangladesh because neither one could see a future here. They didn't think they could compete for jobs with their English skills and Bangladeshi credentials.

But Anila's ESL teacher encouraged her to at least finish Level 5 before applying to second-career college programs. Taking her teacher's advice, Anila started studying accounting around the time Saiful began his nursing program. Soon, Saiful saw accounting as almost a perfect fit for Anila who had taught high school math in Bangladesh.

Despite initial misgivings about nursing in Canada after years as a Bangladeshi doctor, Saiful pushed on with his best efforts, lived on a limited income while attending college, studied with peers as they supported each other, and passed all his courses.

Since graduation, Saiful's been working as a geriatric nurse in a health network's outreach services. Not completely ruling out the medical board exam later, he sees nursing as a well-respected and rewarding practice.

Saiful's happy both he and Anila decided to stay in Canada, even though like many newcomers, they'd felt lonely, frustrated, and discouraged for the first while. Then they attended ESL classes, made new friends, and connected with different professionals. Before long, they also studied for careers connected to their former professions. We should be proud of newcomers like Saiful and Anila, who have persevered with resilience, and found success in Canada.

*A short story by MINA WONG,
first published as Saiful's Perseverance
in Learning Curves, fall 2015.*



Dear Elcee

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

Dear Elcee:

*I am 55 years old, working in a good job but I am going to be made redundant within the next couple of years. I have been offered an opportunity to go back to school for training which will allow me to obtain a better paying and more secure job in my company. The problem is that the idea of going back to school terrifies me. Can an old dog learn new tricks?
Terrified in Toronto*

Dear Terrified:

I recently met a woman who learned to drive for the first time at the age of 65! I asked why she decided to learn to drive at that late age. She said she wanted a challenge. The famous folk artist Grandma Moses did her first painting at 76. Frank McCourt, author of *Angela's Ashes*, didn't take up writing until he was 65. Learning is different as you age but not in a bad way. Here are some key points to ponder;

Midlife learners bring a level of understanding to learning where they are better able to apply new concepts to previous experience. You have already experienced workplace culture and may have encountered challenges that young learners have not and are therefore better able to incorporate and/or transfer these skills to their new workplace.

Midlife learners are often more focussed than younger learners. They are more likely to have a stronger sense of purpose in choosing to return to school and therefore "own" their decision. Studies show that while a younger person may be able to learn new tasks more quickly an older person is able to integrate information more readily.

Midlife learners may be more disciplined in their studies. While a young college student may seem, at times, all over the map in their studies (many of us remember "cramming"

for exams!) the more mature student may be entering studies already accustomed to managing a myriad of demands. They usually have developed abilities through work and personal life in setting priorities, especially in establishing time for study.

Numerous recent scientific studies on neuroplasticity attest to how remarkable the brain is in being able to utilise various parts of the brain in learning new tasks and concepts. There is also scores of evidence on the positive effects on us on our mental and physical health by continuing to learn as we age. The good news is...you CAN teach a more mature dog new tricks. The methods may vary and the cleanup is way, way easier. (Very little shoe chewing and pillow ripping with mature dogs...). I like to think that while younger learners may have more energy and shorter sleep times, older workers gain in the areas of patience and wisdom. I choose patience and wisdom any day. So, go ahead! Enjoy! Your brain will thank you.

written by Deborah Noel

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

FALL 2024: UNIVERSITY IN THE COMMUNITY STEPS OUT!

BY JOANNE MACKAY-BENNETT

Has it really been four and a half years since Covid-19 put an end to our University in the Community in-person classes at Innis College? Amazingly, it has. March 2020 was the beginning of a host of unknown variables. Along with LC readers, UitC students learned to adapt to Zoom, happily meeting each other on the screen rather than in person, and faced the reality and uncertainty of a global pandemic with courage.

Last year, our program focused on how we might replace some of the impersonal and alienating aspects of a post-Covid mega-world with life lived on a smaller, more local, human scale. Even while we were still using Zoom, we wanted to call attention to the things that people do and create and the importance of reclaiming our inclusive, human commonalities.

In the August 2023 issue of Maria Popova's newsletter, *The Marginalian*, neurologist Oliver Sacks (1933-2015) was asked what he considered to be key to the future of the human species. His answer: "In two words... human scale."

He explains further:

"The human scale doesn't mean we can't have grand visions of the universe, it doesn't preclude the development of physics and cosmology, but it does mean one shouldn't be an anonymous person — an anonymous non-person, one of a thousand non-people — in a skyscraper.

I think the challenge is how can one preserve the human scale in great cities, in megalopolis, in corporations, in high technology... but, my God, we must do so — or there will be genocide, atomic bombs, and we'll all perish and take the planet with us. Human scale is the thing that will save us."

It was those words that encouraged us to get out of our seats this Fall and to re-experience the outside world, visual art, the performing arts, and to talk to people whose life work probes some of life's most enduring questions.

This week, we learned the results of the US presidential election. We also learned that the Honourable Murray Sinclair - Anishnaabe lawyer, the first Indigenous person appointed as a judge in Manitoba, chief commissioner of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and senator, among many other remarkable firsts - died.

Murray's recent book, *Who We Are: Four Questions for a Life and a Nation* (McClelland & Stewart, September 2024) asks the reader these questions: Where do I come from? Where am I going? Why am I here? Who am I?

These questions, coupled with Oliver Sacks' plea for the need for a human environment provide very eloquent context

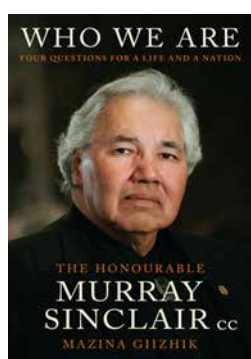
for UitC's Fall program. Perhaps a simple definition of what it means to live one's life on a human scale should and could be this: the recognition of our shared future.



UitC at Trinity St Paul's Centre for Faith Justice and the Arts with Rev. Cheri Di Novo.jpg



UitC at the AGO for Sonia Boyce exhibit



Murray Sinclair's Book Who We Are



Soulpepper Billie Sarah and Ella



Backstage at Soulpepper Theater



At the AGO with JEH MacDonald



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