

Hindsight is 2020

Jody Reeme

BEFORE YOU READ: In English, we have an idiom, “Hindsight is 20/20.” What does it mean? Do you have a similar idiom in your first language? The author is making a pun (a play on words) by spelling it “2020” instead of “20/20.” What do you think she means?

Not Prepared for 2020

I was coming off a year of significant changes – I’d lost a job with a company I’d worked at for over 25 years; my dad and grandmother both died; our only son graduated from high school and went off to college; and we moved. Like just about everyone else, I was not prepared for what 2020 had in store.

I had started a new job and I was finally feeling like I was getting back on my feet when Covid-19 hit and BOOM – the company I was working for folded!

Sometimes, all it takes is one thing to throw a delicate balance off kilter.

Being unemployed again was depressing. I think I spent most of the first month I was not working in bed. I felt tired and listless without a purpose and a place to go.

It was back to the drawing board. Looking for a job is time-consuming and requires a lot of mental energy. It’s hard to stay positive when you’re applying for jobs and getting little, if any feedback. I found that physical exertion was helpful. I focused on yard work and walking our dog. Thankfully, the weather was nice and we could still be outside. I just kept trying to move forward with my job search. I tried to take baby steps and gave myself credit even if I just did one tiny thing each day.

Job Training Changed Everything

As I was looking for a new job, I happened upon the Greater West Town Training Partnership.



They have a woodworkers training program. I applied, got accepted, and started the program in July 2020. It was great to be doing something meaningful again and learning a new craft. I loved going to the woodshop, meeting new people, getting to know them, and learning a new set of skills.

My mental state was vastly improved. The work was physically demanding and I was tired in the evening from working hard rather than being emotionally drained. After getting a good night’s sleep, I was feeling alert and energized during the day. Having a purpose and a new goal gave me a new outlook and improved my mental health immeasurably.

Honestly, the program is the only thing that kept me sane during the pandemic. It gave me a place to go and a goal to focus on, and I learned a new set of skills in a short period. I also met some great people.

Publicly Funded Programs Give People a Fresh Start

These programs are a lifeline for people. They are important for public health and community well-being because they help displaced workers learn a new skill or trade and help people get meaningful

work that is economically sustainable. Sometimes people hit a rough patch where they are unemployed due to circumstances beyond their control, they have been released from prison, or they are recovering from drug or alcohol problems. This program and others like it are paid for with government funding so participants can get a fresh start. They also help connect people with other services like food stamps and transportation assistance. These programs are good for people and their communities. If public funding wasn't available, it is unlikely that private funding would be available to bridge the gap.

Counting My Blessings

In some ways, I was ready and able to accommodate a pivot. I have many interests, I'm a lifelong learner, and I've always liked making things. Unwittingly, I had developed resiliency. I just needed some time to process the setback.

I guess I never gave too much thought to how dramatically working impacted my mental health because I've been pretty lucky to have had challenging jobs that I have liked.

Just last week I was offered a new job. All my hard work has paid off. I'm counting my blessings and looking forward to getting back to work again.



Jody Reeme was a student at the in the Woodworkers Training Program at the Greater West Town Training Partnership in Chicago, Illinois. The program is free and gives displaced workers an opportunity to learn a new skill. Upon completion, GWPT helped Jody find work as a MIG welder at Lawndale Forge in Chicago. She likes old cars, and in the summer of 2018, she drove a 1924 Dodge Brothers roadster from Molalla, Oregon all the way home to Chicago (over 2,200 miles).



Take It Further

1. According to the author, how was the training program she found during 2020 helpful to her?
2. How are publicly funded training programs good for individuals and the community?
3. What is your experience with training programs? Write about it.
4. Research training programs in your community and develop a slideshow presentation so that you can share the information you find with other classes in your program.
5. Share a time when the idiom "Hindsight is 20/20" was true for you. What is something you've learned from 2020?



Explore the "Career Pathways" issue, #45.