

Never Too Late

Karen Mudry

BEFORE YOU READ:

1. Share a time in your life when you used the phrase, "It's never too late."
2. What do the terms *short-lived*, *new-found*, and *full-fledged* mean? (For more on the latter, see the box on the next page.) Notice the use of the hyphen in these terms.

I Ran into a Big Problem

A month before the Covid shutdown, I lost my job of 21 years. The doctor's office where I worked was bought out by a hospital, and they didn't need me anymore. It was very scary to start looking

for jobs and going on interviews when I had been out of the job-hunting game for so long.

After some searching, I found interesting jobs, but I ran into a big problem. Nowadays, most places won't

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even look at your application unless you have a high school diploma or GED. I didn't know what to do. Should I lie and hope they wouldn't notice? Or should I tell the truth and never get an interview? I decided to lie.

I got an interview to work as a medical receptionist at a doctor's office, and they loved me. Everything was looking good until I got a call from Human Resources (HR) asking me for proof of my GED. Needless to say, that conversation was very difficult and embarrassing. I really needed the job, so I told them that I got my GED a long time ago, and I couldn't find the documentation. I really needed the job.



I Got Lucky, But then the Pandemic Hit

Much to my surprise, they decided to hire me anyway based on my many years of work experience. I couldn't believe my luck. Unfortunately, it was *short-lived*. The pandemic hit, they switched to using Telehealth, and so they didn't need a medical receptionist.

So there I was on round two of the job-hunting game. Except this time, there was a *full-fledged* pandemic going on. Not only did I lack a key credential, I was also afraid of rejoining the workforce because of how susceptible people my age are to Covid.

After Many Years, I Went Back to School

I decided to use my *new-found* free time to go back to school. I went and signed up for adult education classes so that I could take the GED test and never again have to relive that awkward conversation I had with HR.

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I was very nervous about going back after so many years. Luckily, I am in a small class that is very informal, and I feel totally comfortable

asking questions. For me, the Covid pandemic ended up being a little beneficial. It gave me the opportunity to go back to school, which I couldn't have done if I was still working. I am so glad to have had this opportunity to learn new things, and I think it is important for people to know that no matter how old you are or what your circumstances are, it is never too late to go back to school so that you can further your career opportunities.

AFTER YOU READ:

1. What do you find interesting or surprising about this article?
2. Read the pull-quote on p. 14. Notice how Karen poses two provocative questions and then a brief answer. What do you think of her writing strategy?
3. Share your story of going back to school. Did the pandemic make it easier or harder? Explain.

Karen Mudry is in the GED Preparation class at Plainville Adult and Continuing Education in Plainville, CT. Karen has four children and six grandchildren that she is very proud of. When Karen gets her GED credential, she hopes to work in the medical field again. Karen really likes doing things that help other people!

Fledgling



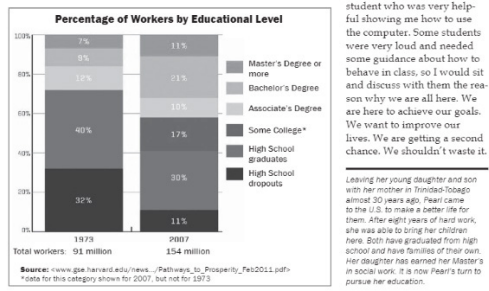
A fledgling is a bird that has just developed the feathers it needs to fly. We use the term **full-fledged** when we are talking about something that is fully developed.

Get Your GED or Lose Your Job

Pearl Brathwaite

On my first day at Mid-Town Manhattan 5 Adult Education class, I was ashamed of myself because I saw so many students who were so much younger than I am. I wanted to leave, but I came to terms with my feelings. I need to be here. If I don't get my high school diploma, I will lose my job. When I began working for an adult daycare center 15 years ago as a nurse's assistant, they did not require a high school diploma. However, last year, they hired an outside agency to manage the business. The new agency requires all their employees to have high school diplomas. The reason this happened is because the agency is now regulated by New York State. Before this, it was considered a private center and was not under New York State regulations. I think that they are trying to improve the standards by requiring all staff to have their GED.

When my boss called me to ask me about my diploma, she told me that I would have six months to earn my GED. I was devastated. I didn't know how I could ever go back to school. I thought my schooling days were over and I was just waiting to complete my years of employment so I could retire. After a few months, I became very comfortable with the younger students in the class. We were soon good friends. We were all exchanging ideas about how to do math in different ways, and some students shared their computer skills. When I started, I didn't even know how to turn on a computer. I was glad I was sitting near a younger student who was very helpful showing me how to use the computer. Some students were very loud and needed some guidance about how to behave in class, so I would sit and discuss with them the reason why we are all here. We are here to achieve our goals. We want to improve our lives. We are getting a second chance. We shouldn't waste it.



Leaving her young daughter and son with her mother in Trinidad-Tobago almost 20 years ago, Pearl came to the U.S. to make a better life for them. After eight years of hard work, she was able to bring her children here. Both have graduated from high school and have families of their own. Her daughter has earned her Master's in social work. It is now Pearl's turn to pursue her education.

Getting Your GED Later in Life

Like Karen Mudry, Pearl Brathwaite worked successfully in her job for many years without a GED. When her company came under new management, they gave her six months to get her GED, or she would be fired. At this point in her life, she was expecting to retire soon. Instead, she enrolled in a GED class.

Read her story, "Get Your GED or Lose Your Job" in **Issue #34** of *The Change Agent* ("What's Age Got to Do With It?" p. 11).