

Women's Perspectives

A Journal of Writing and Art by Adult Learners



Caroline Wang, "Mother of Nature"

WE ARE STILL HERE: WOMEN AND RESILIENCE

Issue 17 2022

Women's Perspectives #17

WE LEARN Mission, Vision and Values

Mission Statement

WE LEARN is a community promoting women's literacy as a tool that fosters empowerment and equity for women.

Vision

WE LEARN seeks to build a just society and healthy communities. Therefore, we focus on education, specifically the basic literacies women need to gain access to systems of power and to achieve personal and community empowerment. Women's pursuit of multiple literacies gives visibility to our experiences as women, sustains our on-going desire to learn, encourages critical thinking, and provides the support and information necessary for reflection, understanding, and action to change our current situations.

WE LEARN engages a diverse membership community of adult basic education and literacy learners and alumni, educators, researchers and professional women, community activists and anyone dedicated to moving our mission forward.

WE LEARN members hold these values inwardly reflective of our networking organization and outwardly active to the communities we reach.

Values

- I. WE LEARN is Women-Centered / Women-Positive**
- II. WE LEARN Supports Social Change**
- III. WE LEARN Works towards Justice & Equity**
- IV. WE LEARN Acts through Participatory Practices**

Book Design

Layout and design by Stacie Evans, WE LEARN Board.

Artwork and photographs by Caroline Wang, Alejandra Tenorio, Wen Chen, and Lily Wang

Women's Perspectives #17

A Journal of Writing and Art by Adult Learners

2022

We Are Still Here: Women and Resilience

We Are Still Here: Women and Resilience (Women's Perspectives Issue 17) showcases original writing and artwork by adult literacy, basic education, and English language students across all levels. Student writers and artists were encouraged to reflect and to share ideas on the theme. Possible writing prompts were provided, and learners were encouraged to write about whatever aspect of the topic resonated with them. Prompts provided:

- *What blessings came from the pandemic?*
- *What surprised you about being in lockdown?*
- *How did you work with others to succeed during the pandemic? Where did you find strength?*
- *Write about how you survived and thrived through hard times.*
- *Write about illness and how it is part of life. Write tips to help others facing challenges.*

Through personal stories, poems, photographs, paintings and lino prints, students addressed such issues as overcoming obstacles, personal strength, staying in or returning to school, gratitude, dealing with isolation and financial hardship, and finding hope and connection. The writings show strength, love, kindness, respect and many other attributes. We hope this collection of writing will encourage and inspire all students as they have inspired us. These writings illustrate the power of supporting women's literacy.



WE LEARN
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WE LEARN received writings from students across the United States and from Trinidad. They represented a range of topics and writing ability. This issue features 46 writings, five pieces of art, and four personal photographs. The selection committee chose work they felt best represented the theme. They also considered voice, clarity, heart, and writing technique. In reproducing the work for publication, we have corrected typing and spelling errors, but have maintained the writers' original wording even in cases of non-standard sentence construction.

2022 Selection Committee

Geraldine Cannon Becker, Maine

Marie Doerner, California

Stacie Evans, New York

Anna Fernandez-Buehrens

Erik Jacobson, New Jersey

Jaye Jones, New York

Priyanka Sharma, Massachusetts

Joshua Stark, New York

Shellie Walters, Washington

You can purchase printed copies of this journal by contacting

WE LEARN: wp@welearnwomen.org.

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WE LEARN publishes original student work in *Women's Perspectives*.
 Please respect the integrity of this work.

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Thank You

to the participating programs that encouraged their students to send writings

Alameda Reads	Alameda, California
San Diego College of Continuing Education	San Diego California
South Brunswick Public Library	Monmouth, New Jersey
Borough of Manhattan Community College	New York, New York
Pleasanton Library Literacy Program	Pleasanton, California
Hamilton, Fulton, Montgomery BOCES	Johnstown, New York
Baylor Women's Correctional Institution	New Castle, Delaware
Adult Literacy Tutors Association	Belmont, Trinidad

A Note about Some Terms

For readers who are not in the literacy field, here are explanation for some acronyms that are commonly used in literacy programs.

ABE – Adult Basic Education

GED – General Education Development

HSE – High School Equivalency

ESL – English as a Second Language

ESOL – English for Speakers of Other Languages

A Note about Authors' Names

Some writers have chosen to publish using only their first name, only their last name, only a shortened version of their name, or only their initials. Others have chosen not to publish their names at all.

Note from the WE LEARN Board of Directors and Advisory Committee

The Covid-19 pandemic continues and we have continued to learn how to care for ourselves and those around us, continued to learn how to move forward in our lives even with the pandemic challenging us.

In last year's journal, we acknowledged the struggle so many in our communities were dealing with. We acknowledged the losses we, our families, and our friends dealt with. In this year's journal, we acknowledge, honor, and celebrate that we are still here, still finding ways to care for ourselves and our communities, still struggling, still pushing forward. And we acknowledge that, along with hardship, there are sometimes surprise gifts that come to us in hard times.

Our hearts are still with all of you, and we hope you are safe and healthy. We hope that you are continuing to push toward your goals, continuing to find and celebrate moments of joy. We are still here, and we have shown ourselves to be resilient. We are still here, and it is still the strength of our communities that will get us through the pandemic and the other challenges that are before us.

We wish you all the best and send you love, hope, and strength. We think you'll see love, hope, and strength in the work included in this issue of *Women's Perspectives*.

Yours in family, community, and productive struggle,
WE LEARN

INTRODUCTION

Thoughts from Board Member Shellie Walters

Shellie Walters has been on the WE LEARN Board of Directors since 2010. She is a student leader and was chair of the 2013 Women's Perspectives Committee. When the 2012 committee was developing issue #7, Shellie outlined some very important points for student writers to consider. These ideas made a great introduction to issue #7. We think they make a great introduction to any issue of Women's Perspectives, so we have continued to share them in each issue since 2012.

As students, we often put ourselves down. We don't think we can do anything. We put ourselves down just because we can't read or write well or can't do math, and maybe we don't have a very good education or had bad experiences in school. We didn't think we could be good or useful until we had a good education.

But what were we doing with what we DID have before we came into a literacy program?

For example, my verbal skills were very good, but I didn't have written skills. I could hide my poor writing skills because I have great verbal skills. I could cover other things because of that, too.

Women who have poor reading and writing skills have lots of other skills, though they might not recognize them as important.

Many women were successful in work or their family or their community, but they were not recognized as successful because of a lack they had in another area.

So, when we come back to school, we're seen as lacking. We celebrate our school successes AFTER we come back, but we forget that we were also productive before!

We have always found ways to make things work in our lives. We have skills in everyday survival beyond what reading can teach us, but we forget we have these coping/surviving skills.

For example, many women have a good work ethic. They are good workers and are able to keep a job. When women come back to school, the teachers or tutors get focused on how much education they don't have rather than how they are or what they can already do.

There are different standards. We don't need the degrees to be successful in many areas, but education helps us to be more successful. Every step up the rung should be celebrated.

In this issue, we celebrate students' voices of strength and contribution. As students, we need to have a look at what we DO have rather than what we don't have. We DO have an important point of view. We ARE already making contributions to society, and they will become stronger with more education.



We Are Still Here: Women and Resilience

Women's Perspectives, Issue #17

Still Here

Robin Flowers – San Diego College of Continuing Education

We are still here

We are strong

We are healthy

I am still here

I strive to be positive

I raise my voice

We support one another

We share the workload

We are still here.

Hope

Lisa Marcia Garcia – Adult Literacy Tutors Association

If you only carry one thing throughout your entire life, let it be hope.

Let it be hope that better things are always ahead.

Let it be hope that you can get through even the toughest of times.

Let it be hope that you are stronger than any challenge that comes your way.

Let it be hope that you are exactly where you are meant to be right now and that you are on the path to where you are meant to be.

Because during these times hope will be the very thing that carries you through.

Positivity in Covid Times

Laverne Deriggs – Adult Literacy Tutors Association

What surprised me during the lockdown was the creativity of our people. We learned to adapt to our limited time outdoors. We learned new skills, those who were not able to sew, they are learning or have learned how to, some learned to cut their own hair and some learned to cook. Those who can already cook have mastered the skill and are mini chefs in their own home

A lot has happened since the first case of the Covid in Trinidad and Tobago. While the majority of us understand what this virus can do and has done, there is still a minority that believes this is a hoax created by man. There are those who believe that the government brought this virus in to control and dictate to the citizens.

I understand how dangerous it is. I understand I need to follow the protocols set out by the Ministry of Health, wash my hands, wear a mask, and watch my distance.

Since I am following the health guidelines, I am also building my immune system (resistance) because I have to adjust to the outside environment. I must do my part in order to protect myself and my family as well.

We need to support each other always not just in a pandemic. Support comes in many ways, like being there to listen, lend a helping hand, comfort in times of grief. Doing my best whether it is providing a meal or assisting with hampers for the needy and I have assisted in all of the above. What support I got hmm... I got that satisfying feeling of being able to assist and it made me realize how much we take for granted, how much we are blessed. My strength came from God and just being able to call on Him is a great source of my strength and comfort.

One blessing in disguise in this pandemic, was the connecting of families, spending time talking, sharing, doing chores together and cooking. Getting to know my girls a little better and just spending time with them.

I Am Glad We Are Still Here

Alma Walker – San Diego College of Continuing Education

When the pandemic quarantined everyone, it brought families together. Also I believe that crime slowed down greatly. People were afraid to come out. My son works in the medical field and he told me to wear a mask, use gloves and to practice social distancing. I shared that with everyone. I believe that I am here today because of that advice.

Covid-19 symptoms are muscle pain, difficulty breathing and weakening of the heart. I was scared not to follow the restriction guidelines because I have already had two heart attacks, COPD and myofascial pain syndrome where at no notice, pain can attack all my muscles (full blown arthritis.) I found strength in my medical condition and it focused me so that I followed all the safety guidelines.

I was totally surprised about the amount of toilet paper and hand sanitizer that people bought at the beginning of the pandemic. There were lines in the supermarket and shelves were empty. I was stunned by the ex-president's comment about giving Lysol injections and now people are afraid to take the COVID 19 shots so the pandemic seems like it will never end.

I am a Christian and I pray during difficult times to have patience, meekness and compassion and love for others. It is easier when you focus on other people's needs. I especially care about the elderly. People who can't take care of themselves. That includes children and some homeless.

Nobody is perfect except God. Everyone has some kind of illness or addiction. You can overcome a lot by admitting that you have a problem and getting help: self-checking for lumps., taking yearly physicals and taking your medicine. Many elderly people are afraid to go to the doctor and leave it until it is too late.

Remember you are not alone. People who commit suicide hurt more people than themselves: parents, friends. In the past, I used drugs to cope with my abuse and never feeling loved. But every time I sobered up. The problem and pain was still there. There is hope and places to go to get help. You have not because you ask not. I love everyone and I am glad we are still here.

Blessings in Perilous Times

Priscilla Teelucksingh – Adult Literacy Tutors Association

Nights turned into days and days turned into nights. I for one was not sure of the time or day anymore because of the new norm, being quarantined and locked down. This is what the Covid-19 virus had done to us. Being responsible for my own family was hard enough, but here I was responsible for my patients as well. There were days when I didn't even have the zeal to come downstairs to talk to them. We could not go out. We could not visit friends and family. We could not even hug our kids. I wanted to be strong but I knew I was breaking down slowly.

One day we were making plans to go to the beaches, the next we were hearing news of a deadly disease overpowering the world. At first I was not worried, but when the cases began to pop up in Trinidad my anxiety went up with it. I cannot explain how worried I became for my loved ones and especially my patients. They were old and I felt they would not survive this epidemic.

The virus forced the government to lock down the country for three months at first. During this time many people lost their jobs and livelihoods and this is where I started to count my blessings. It was at this point that all my complaining started to turn around, at least for a while, when I realised that my home for the elderly was actually a blessing in disguise. I could help my family members financially and I began to thank God for this.

When the three months of lockdown ended, I was overjoyed. I began to make plans in my head to go out, to take my children out and to visit family. Then the news came. The virus was worse than ever and thousands instead of hundreds of people were dying all over the world. Trinidad was lucky so far, but that was only because we were facing more and more lockdowns. This is where my frustration became overwhelming.

Being stuck in the house all day with the children was not something I was ready for. I mean, here I was, barely able to read and was forced to sit through online classes with them. My head wanted to explode. As for my marriage, it was only now I started to realise all the things I didn't like about my husband. I think he began to feel the same way and the quarrels started. We argued about the toilet seat, the towel on the bed, the children, the TV being loud, the food too tasty. We argued for just about anything and on days when I could no longer argue, I locked myself in the bathroom and cried.

Every time I thought the lockdown was coming to an end and the virus was under control, we were hit with something else. The latest being a six-month-long state of emergency and a 9pm curfew. One day I realised this was the new norm. I began to search out different coping mechanisms to deal with my stress. I began to exercise, to read, to watch movies and to play games with my children. I began to appreciate that we had social media and could video call our families. I began to take online courses, ALTA being one, and most importantly I began to pray more. I realised that I could only face these challenges with God.

It has been two whole years since this pandemic and I still have all my family, my friends, my business and none of us were infected thus far by the disease. If this is not enough to thank God for, then nothing is. I learned a lot during these perilous times but most importantly, I learned that life is not ours to do with as we please. My only prayer is that this ends sooner rather than later and we can finally hug each other again.

Change Is Good

Lily Wang – Alameda Reads

It's been two years since the coronavirus began to spread around the world. The coronavirus has brought great disaster to the world, and every one of us is deeply hurt and troubled by it. I am deeply troubled, but like everything else it has two sides. It has also been beneficial to me, which leads to the question, what blessings came from the pandemic?

First of all, the obesity problem that had been bothering me for years has been solved. Before the pandemic I weighed more than 180 pounds. It was the cause of many health problems for me, such as a fatty liver, dizziness, and poor mobility. I did not feel good about myself, and I could not wear the beautiful clothes that I used to wear. After being quarantined at home in March 2020, I decided to start losing weight. Instead of going out shopping, I stayed home, exercised, and changed my diet. Now I've lost more than 40 pounds. All the diseases caused by obesity have disappeared, and I can wear beautiful clothes again. It was a huge gain for me.

The second benefit is that I grew out my hair. I have had short hair since I cut my very long hair in 1993. I wanted to grow my hair long many times since then, but I couldn't. I had to go out and meet people every day, because a little longer hair can get messy. Long hair is beautiful, but it is also hard to control. But since March 2020 I haven't had to go out and see people every day. Also, barbershops were closed, so I took the opportunity to grow out my hair. Today, whenever I see my long hair in the mirror, I feel very happy and satisfied. The epidemic has helped me realize my nearly 30 year dream of having long hair.

I often think that life cannot be happy all the time, the world is unpredictable. Whenever disaster comes, human beings often feel helpless, we cannot fight against nature. At times like these, we can only be optimistic and positive, and even use it to find things we can do and receive blessings from them.



A New Light

Frances Craig – HFM BOCES Montgomery County Correctional Facility

I choose to no longer be a prisoner of my past. Days and nights were exhausting and painful. Roads were long and unmanageable. In 2019 getting a DWI put me in a very difficult spot. I ended up in the legal system. Trying to cope with it all wasn't easy. I struggled on a daily basis with anxiety and depression. The constant worrying and pain has taken my joy from within my heart and soul. I felt like a failure and I knew being a failure isn't the person I truly am. I already felt trapped so when the pandemic hit it, didn't make it any easier for me. Being in lockdown only worsened my addiction. I was fighting with my own worst enemy, myself. Finally finding the light was such a beautiful experience. I realized that there's no better way to live but sober. The unconditional love, joy, support and contentment my daughter and family brings me is the best feeling ever and I wouldn't change that for the world. I found strength within my loved ones to keep pushing through the hard times all while staying sober. I believe there are many positive outcomes in everyday life if a person is willing to let go of the negative from the past and embrace the positive that life brings you. I know that things happen for a reason and ultimately all of the obstacles that I have faced in my life have made me a stronger, wiser and determined person today. I'm fortunate in so many ways and I have a real sense of gratitude for all of the blessings that god has filled my life with. I'm finally free spreading my wings. God only gives his toughest battles to his strongest soldiers. I overcame many hurdles from childhood trauma to addiction and now finding a new way of life everyday embracing my recovery. I'm a loving and devoted mother, daughter, sister, aunt and friend. I'm finding happiness in many different ways. It's the little things that mean the most. Sobriety fills my days and nights with love, health, happiness, truth, peace, joy, balance, laughter, possibility and serenity and it can for you too. I love myself and am very grateful for who and what I have in my life. Someday I would love to give back to the world and be able to help others who have been in my shoes. If I could give others who are facing challenges of their own advice, I would say always stand strong and proud. Nobody is perfect. Change is powerful. Continue to have faith and believe in yourself even if you are having a bad day because giving up is never an option. Know that you are stronger than yesterday and that your future is destined to be bright. Positive self-talk enlightens your heart and gives the encouragement a person needs. I

truly believe that god only has the best in store for me. You are what you make of yourself and I will continue to be a better version of myself every single day living my life one day at a time.

My Pandemic Adventures

Wen Chen – Santa Monica Public Library

When the pandemic started my gym and dance studio were closed. Our classes were canceled. We were frustrated by suddenly not being able to do our routines.

I used to have Cintya's Zumba class three times a week in the morning at a dance studio. I would go to the gym after my art classes. During the beginning of the pandemic, everything was closed, so we had to use the internet to attend our art classes to study with our teachers on zoom meetings. I felt very difficult to have art classes from Zoom. It was impossible to study sculpting from Zoom on the computer.

Cintya's decided to have her Zumba classes at Mar Vista Park. I have Cintya's classes at park in the morning and I have her Facebook classes at night. I am loosing my weight during the pandemic. I focus on health during the pandemic. Many singles women joined Cintya's classes to look for support during the pandemic. One friend AnnMarie just got divorced, so she made a few videos about how she prepared her pancake breakfast in a little size to avoid gaining weight. We felt she was sexy and funny in her videos, so she continued to make some funny videos in her apartment about her jazz-dancing class, and how she liked my muffins. We all gave her like and love for her Facebook videos. We all had fun by watching her videos too. Soon, she lost weight to have a better body figure after she joined Cintya's "Challenge" classes. We support each other women in the class who are focusing on weight lost.

I joined Literacy program at Santa Monica Library after I met Tara before the pandemic happened. I decided to focus on my writing because Tara found Susan and Diane to teach me how to write the plays and stories. I could emailed them anytime about my questions, and they would answer me by email, when they had time. There was no set schedule for this, so I could learn freely. Then Tara helped me join Greffen Playhouse workshops. Brian is a great teacher who has shown me how to focus on writing plays. He taught us on Zoom on Wednesday nights, once a month. I have plenty of time to study his content of playwright. I was excited to meet all these professional teachers to help me in writing my stories.

Tara helps me believe I can write. She told me that State Library is looking for "Covid Diary" stories and she encouraged me to participate in the contest. I wrote "Cintya's Zumba Class". It was a funny and true story about my Zumba class during the pandemic. Tara asked Susan to be my editor for my stories.

Susan said my story is full of positive thinking and humor. It was published by the California State Library on its “ Covid Diaries “ website in January 2021. Diane edited my stories “ Space Symphony” and “ My Ballet Classes at CSUN “. What an achievement during the pandemic. I am great full to Tara,Diane, Susan and Brian for their help without their help, such a thing would not have happened for me.

I came from Taiwan when I was 20 years old, English classes were difficult for me. I could not write well and It took me 10 years to get my college diploma because I could not pass the writing test. My grandma owned a theater in Taiwan. I grew up by watching films in her theater. I dreamed of being a film maker since I was a child. It was very hard for me to write in English because I do not know a lot of vocabulary and grammar well, but I never gave up my dream to be a film maker. I decided to study hard in writing during the pandemic. I will continue learning how to write the plays and stories in the future. My dream to be a playwright is getting closer.

Dear Covid

Nathan Binger – San Diego College of Continuing Education

Dear Covid 19,

Why oh why are you still here? We have been stuck in the same place for the past two years. When will you end? You are still here, but why? You say you're done, but then you had a brother then a sister. Your family needs to stop growing and leave us alone. We already have stuff to worry about. You didn't have to come here, ruining our lives.

You can't stop us. We had the vaccine. We wear our masks. We keep our distance. We are still here.

So please, do us a favor and leave this earth and die so we can go back to normal.

Sincerely Nathan

P.S. Don't come back

Finding My Strength in Covid-19

Ayona Elcock McGuire – Adult Literacy Tutors Association

I know I am resilient because it reminds me of my strength. I certainly knew what it meant to be a woman. I am a beautiful, creative, multifaceted and a loving being. I am committed to empowering and making humanity better. I am a Woman!

What about the word resilient? Resilience as quoted from Oxford dictionary means the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties or toughness. I knew I was resilient. I came from humble beings. I am trained by my faith in God and situations to KEEP FIGHTING. My mom would say “It’s not where you start but where you finish that counted”, I am resilient because I have to be. I continue to fight because I have purpose: I have life, I love, I have joy and peace, I am content. I believe in the protection of my civic right and the people I love. I continue to fight in spite of religion or culture and I keep at it until it is DONE.

When it seems insurmountable like when my mom died of cancer during the pandemic, my heart broke into little pieces. Your mom in good relationships is your backbone. She helps with every facet of your life, when she died I was lost. I couldn’t grieve because everywhere I turned someone was grieving and in pain. Their need for comfort seemed more important than mine. I had to be strong and meet the needs of my family. I am a wife, mother, daughter, sister, friend, homemaker, teacher, clerk and companion to the ones I love. I had to be strong to keep safe my family in their time of need. I felt overwhelmed because there was so much pain and I was aware of my need to grieve. I needed to grieve but where to go, all churches were closed.

I broke down watching a cartoon called Incredible 2 one night. Many tears were shed that night and emotionally I was empty. There was a deep and wide void in my heart that would take years to fill and heal. I decided there and then that God is the only one that would fill me with strength. I poured out my heart to God about the unfairness of life and how cheated I felt.

God comforted my heart with renewed strength as I prayed and he reminded me of his promises.

My heart began to heal and I could breathe again. There was still HOPE.

Covid-19 Outbreak

Geetha Samayamanthula – South Brunswick Public Library

COVID-19 pandemic influenced all over the world population just like a tsunami made them to test their strengths and weaknesses. Some people learn how to work with others to find strength to succeed in difficult times.

Even though we faced many difficulties during the pandemic, we blessed with a new home. While searching to buy a home we were very careful to keep us healthy and safe by wearing masks and sanitizing ourselves all the time.

During the pandemic my daughter suffered from anxiety and depression. In the beginning days of her illness we totally helpless to support my daughters health issues. We took my daughter to the emergency for three times as we were unable to find out the cause for the illness. We spent a lot of money for her treatment but no use. Because of COVID-19 outbreak all of the rooms In the hospital filled with covid-19 patients and there was no room for people suffer from other illnesses. Most of the appointments were virtual and moreover it was very hard for us to take a Doctor's appointment. It took three months for us to rectify her mental health issues. During her treatment once doctor suggested me to arrange sleepover by inviting all of her friends and she also suggested me to send her to friends house once in a week. Because of the pandemic no one is ready to invite their friends to home. There was a lot of awareness created among the people through social media like WhatsApp and Facebook. They didn't want their kids to sick by playing with others. It was a really hard time for us to support my daughter in that situation. She doesn't want to attend the online classes. My husband and me started helping her in studies. Slowly she developed some confidence to attend her classes daily without our help. That was the most memorable moment in our life. The most surprising part in those days was how can we get that much strength to face challenges during the pandemic.

We moved to our new home during the pandemic and in winter too. We live like water bubbles in your balloon for some days. We didn't even know anyone in that community for help and my kids don't have friends for some days since it is a new Community. Right now my kids are going to school and I started working in a school.

Recently I got exposed to Covid. I took the Covid test as I was suffering from cold and body pains. I was on pins and needles waiting for the test results. It took two days. Finally I tested positive to Covid. In the spur of the moment I felt

nervous, gloomy and I couldn't sleep whole night. But I convinced myself illnesses Is part of our life. My husband and me started working with each other to succeed during the isolation period. My family tested negative except me. I don't have any symptoms right now but still need to isolate myself in order to prevent the spread of Virus.I started using the mask and gloves whole day and we stopped using the same bathroom for everyone. It was like pulling teeth to my husband to balance his work and household things without my help. During the isolation Period I spend my time by writing an essay to we learn team. Unfortunately at the end of my isolation period

My husband tested positive and he went into the isolation for 10 days. It was just like never ending and he got sick for five days. After that he's feeling better. Hopefully

He will be better soon.

People who are having hypertension and diabetes considered as high risk for COVID-19. My husband has diabetes. That is the only reason we took extra care like wash and dry the vegetables after buying. We also stay at home and spend some quality time with the family and making sure everything is clean and sanitize before we use. Going to the grocery store was bit hard in those days. We used to take turns to get the groceries with my friends family. So that we reduced our exposure time to public. Sometimes we bought groceries through online. We sanitized every single store bought product before we use.

Working from home is not easy. Many of you have children, Partners and pets who are also at home and you are balancing your workload while making sure your children engage In the own online learning. Remember to breath. Take the dog for a walk. Stay in daily contact with your teams and managers use technology to connect virtually and keep those water cooler conversations going. Keep track of your sleeping schedule and spend some time for exercise. Especially working ladies which requires their continued service and support for their children who are still in residence. Your dedication and commitment to our community is commendable. We should be thankful to the people who are working in healthcare services and custodial services for their dedication during the difficult times. Remember that not all the heroes wear the capes.

Prevention is better than cure. All of our scientists were working hard to find a vaccine for COVID-19. Health officials trying to achieve herd immunity in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Even though many people hospitalized due to COVID-19 still some people refused to take the vaccine. That was the most surprising part for me in these days. Vaccine helps us to get well better soon even though you are infected or exposed. Now a days most of the COVID-19

patients treated at home without doctor's help. Taking the vaccine is a real boon in COVID-19 outbreak.

Stay home stay safe!!

Journey as an Immigrant

Sherita Dawson – Julie's Family Learning Program

Living in an unfamiliar place can be tough sometimes, because you either gain joy or pain

Living in a country that you cannot call home because of all the struggles that you've endured

Living in your head when you regret all the choices you have made, still hoping for a better day

Living in a world that you just don't know how to make yours no matter how hard you try

Living on edge, taking chances, and being brave, having faith, and leading the way

Living on a journey that was only made for me and I will not complain

Live your dreams, they say, no matter how big or small

Live for yourself and be who you are no matter if you fall

Life is precious and so is time, But I wish I knew what I should do

Living In America teaches me alot, some I am glad that I know and others I wish not

Life here can be hard sometimes, but my journey taught me alot

Live in the present, and not in the past; once you have life you have hope

Are words that I keep in my head, everytime I look around me and see where I am

I pray that things will work out for the better, because I took a chance not knowing the weather.

My Tiny Roses

Wen Chen – Pleasanton Library Literacy Program



Resilient – Covid the Terrorist

Anonymous – Baylor Women's Correctional Institution

It began as a speck,
In a lab on a desk.
So secure that no concerns were made,
Until one night it released,
The mark of the beast.
No one realized till' it was too late.

My god it spread fast
It was dark, it was masked.
Nowhere was exempt from the hell.
From the outside looking in,
It didn't seem like we could win,
Some were devoting; risking their life I couldn't.

Don't ever take for granted,
Those hugs from nanny.
You never know when the curtain calls,
Make peace with friends,
Don't delete push send.
You never know when the sky falls.

Now we're on the downward slope,
Stalking and clawing at hope.
The worst is over now, that we'll see,
Don't give up on the dream,
Even though impossible it seems.
If we stick and work together there's nothing we can't achieve.

In early 2020, it began as a buzzing.
Like a hive of bees attacking DE,
Fending their queen.
Low at first, questioning and total

Incomprehension of what was happening,
And what was about to dominate and shock our comfortable lives.

Just like 9-11, I first lived this hell through the news.
Hour after hour I saw on TV firsthand how
Our lives as we knew it were crumbling,
Masks were being worn, not to prevent
Dust particles from the wreckage
But to stop a ghost.
A ghost not of total, quick devastation
But of an invisible, slow, accelerating death.

I felt the same fear and panic as 9-11
But now the terrorists is COVID
But way more cunning and insidious.

But I also am watching a similar positive effect of these terror attacks.
Once again America has felt for their neighbors.
Hands in the dark, offering help, love, or support.
Once again America has rallied around the ill or our friends in need.

Once again I have been given hope that, together,
We can get past this storm and create a new way
Once again America has shown the most important trait to ourselves
And the rest of the world.
And that is that even though our way of life
As we know, it will never be the same
We will never see what it is to fail,
And we will forever remain RESILIENT!

We're Still Here – 2 Years In

Nikesha Gill – Adult Literacy Tutors Association

Covid 19 has hit the world by storm. When I heard about the virus at first, it was just another thing that happened overseas. We would have never thought that our little island, sweet Trinidad and Tobago, would have been affected. But we're still here 2 years in. Since the first case, it has been almost two years and the 'Covid Virus' is showing no sign of leaving us. Adjustments had to be made so that I could withstand what has become the new normal.

My husband and I got ourselves into gardening. This was a method to utilize our time and it was also beneficial to our family and close relatives. We planted long and short-term crops. We bought and reared some chickens which we still use for meat and eggs today. We are also considering turning our project into a small business especially since there was less income being generated.

Mentally, going through this lockdown was challenging because of the financial strain as my sector was shut down on two occasions. I did not receive any relief grant from the government on these occasions. Looking at the bills mounting up was so depressing for me. I also had to become my four-year-old daughter's teacher at the time and that in itself became a task. I never had the responsibility of teaching her at that level, therefore it was a little difficult. However, it has now become a joy to see her progress in such a short time. I had to learn to withstand all of this in addition with my everyday life. I made it through only because of my faith in Jesus Christ.

As women we are resilient and no matter what the situation may be we have to strive. We do it for ourselves. I need my daughter to always see me as a strong woman no matter what our life circumstances are. We're still here and I must say that life has changed. I believe that it is not back to the 'normal' that we remembered. With this change I have chosen to look at it as an opportunity to develop myself.

For the past seventeen years I found myself in the same position, in the same profession and Covid is helping me to make the change I need. Making myself more marketable entails attending ALTA classes to develop the confidence that I need. When I complete this program I will be pursuing a degree as long as God allows me to. I believe that studying while my child is still in school would be healthy for her and it will motivate her in her studies.

Resilience to me is looking for the best in every situation and my daughter is definitely benefiting, as well as my husband. Our family has become closer. Past, present and post lockdown will represent a new chapter. God has been awesome at providing for us. I am striving to put myself in a somewhat secure position. I always wanted more for myself and my family.

Women and Resilience

Radha – Adult Literacy Tutors Association

A resilient woman is a strong-minded person who thinks of her family before herself. This person does what it takes to make ends meet. The first lockdown did not affect my family and me. My mother taught us to save for a rainy day. Covid is that rainy day. Covid-19 changed our lives in the second lockdown. I started selling online. The response was amazing. I learnt something new, but I lost so much more. My grandmother passed away and I couldn't go to the funeral. This made me look at life differently.

I'm a stay-at-home mom for the past two years now. I enjoy spending time with my children but I miss travelling and going on vacation. I never thought I would live to see a pandemic. There are so many people who had lost their jobs. Children could not attend school because they do not have electricity nor internet. Their parents couldn't afford to purchase a computer or one of the parents was a victim of COVID19.

In lockdown I can sleep with no fear. During the lockdown I shared quality family time. I never thought that I would have to stop working for so long and stay with my kids. At first, we enjoyed it. We needed some rest, but not for so long. I do appreciate the teachers much more now than before. I can't do as I please anymore. This is a life lesson no one can teach you.

When my mom came back from my grandmother's funeral, she was in quarantine for seven days to make sure she was not ill. This disease doesn't give you a call and say I am passing by you tomorrow. We need to take all the necessary precautions to protect ourselves and loved ones. Wash your hands, use sanitizer, take your vitamins, wear a mask that will save your life. I can count my blessings. I had never had to worry about anything. I put my trust in God. He gives me the strength to face each day.

We're Still Here – Woman and Resilience

Vera Sooknana – Adult Literacy Tutors Association

As an individual is born so shall they die. Within this lifespan, a human faces challenges. One of these challenges is illness which affects all of us. My experience and teaching from my parents, teachers and elders say that cleanliness is next to godliness. Hence, we practice personal hygiene and pray daily as a family. Doing this on a regular basis maintained good family relations and values.

Unfortunately, during this era no one cares anymore about friends and family preservation. In this pandemic, many individuals only cared about themselves. Going to the beaches and rivers were part of a family reunion. As a result of the lockdown there is less interaction with family members and this makes me sad. The pandemic has also had a great impact on my business. As a seamstress, no activities mean no need for outfits hence no work especially with further lockdown by the government.

Covid has greatly affected my family however we have been extremely happy for that time. We are now currently thriving by saving and focusing on basic necessities. It is imperative that individuals adhere to the strict measures taken by the Health Authorities. Take the vaccination and practice the guidelines on a regular basis. This pandemic has affected many people in different ways and everyone has a freedom of choice, either to take the vaccine or not. The result is yet to be seen. I hope this pandemic could be resolved as soon as possible to save mankind.

We're Still Here – Women and Resilience

SR – Adult Literacy Tutors Association

During the pandemic I found my strength by discussing the matter with family and friends. I was able to help others deal with the pandemic. The pandemic had taught me how to survive and appreciate the little that I have.

When the lockdown occurred, I went into panic mode and went to the supermarket to purchase lots of foodstuff. I was scared it wasn't going to have food for us to live. Other people went panic buying and forgot that the less fortunate had to eat as well.

People were fighting over toilet paper, could you imagine that? (Toilet paper!) While others were wondering how they were going to live. Due to the Covid 19, food prices went sky high. I stood in amazement wandering if this is the same sweet Trinidad and Tobago where tourists once visited.

People have become self-centered and only thinking about themselves. Churches were distributing food stuff to the less fortunate, but the same self-centred people were making trips to fill their homes. Look how heartless Trinidadians had become! The pandemic had taught me how to care for others more than I had before. It had taught me to care more, love more and to give more without looking for anything in return.

If others will take the time to really look at the pandemic, they will search their hearts and let us fight the deadly disease so our lives can return to normal. Sometimes I think this is a test to see how we are treating others and how far we will go to only protect ourselves and not others. My thoughts are God is watching us!

I know I am a resilient woman. Covid 19 had entered my home without an invitation. I was at home one evening when my husband came from work not feeling well. He said it was just the flu. Immediately I knew something was wrong. Later that evening around 11pm to be exact, I woke up and I felt the Covid walking through my body. It felt like a human being walking on my chest. I told my husband that it is not flu, this is Covid.

I had to protect my family from this virus, we did steams, sanitized and took vitamins, but the Covid still found its way into my husband's body causing him to be hospitalised in a serious condition where he almost died. My family had to go into quarantine for twenty-four days. Staying inside, unable to purchase food items and depending on others to do so was very difficult.

Coping while my husband was hospitalised was a very trying time. I was unable to visit him in the hospital. I kept wondering if this was good or bad. Going through this situation was one of the worse things I have ever been through. People were calling for information that I couldn't give.

After six weeks of being hospitalised, my husband was Covid-free and it was time to return home. It was a Friday morning and I arrived at the hospital to collect him. I almost did not recognise him. He was almost skin and bones.

I had to adjust my life because one of the damages that Covid-19 left him with was lung damage. He is now on oxygen. This was a new way of living for me. The doctors said he would have to live on oxygen for a long time or for the rest of his life. But because of all the care that was given to him, he was able to recover quickly, and so did I. With God's help and prayers of a resilient woman, his improvement was unbelievable to the doctors.

Women's Resilience

Melissa Williams – Adult Literacy Tutors Association

During the pandemic I found my strength by reading and doing more outside activities like exercising and playing netball right outside my house. We all know illness is a part of life but at the end of the day it is how people deal with it. I will find out what illness I have and treat it as best as I can. I drink plenty of water and take vitamins to keep my body hydrated.

During the pandemic, it took a toll on my life by leading me down the road of depression as I could not go my way or interact with my friends. Once I started doing different things and started thinking positively for example by asking God for strength and practicing gratitude things improved. I knew anything was possible if I kept the faith and trust in God so then during the quarantine my experience became different.

I remained in high alert to ensure my safety and my interaction with my family was by telephone by calling or messaging each other. We kept our distance but I kept myself occupied. I still had my job in the pandemic which I was grateful for as some of my colleagues got laid off because they contracted the virus. There were new policies such as sanitizing every two hours as well as wearing masks at all times and washing of hands.

The banks and other work organisations were on rotation and some people were even laid off. One of the positives in this pandemic was that I started classes with ALTA to keep myself and my brain occupied. This was convenient for me because of my working hours.

Covid was a good and a bad experience for me. I learned to appreciate my family and loved ones, love life, live good with people and be gentle with others. We are not sure if this virus will go anytime soon but we have to understand and obey all the rules and regulations to protect our country.

We're Still Here – Women and Resilience

TW – Adult Literacy Tutors Association

One blessing that came out of the pandemic was I rekindled my relationship with God. A few months ago, I believed death came knocking at my door. Covid 19 was spreading like wildfire, it was all over and people just kept dying.

In June 2021 that was one day I would never forget. I remember reaching over to kiss my son and he was hotter than a frying pan. Two days later, I began to notice symptoms on myself and knew it was time for us to get tested. While at home on 18 days quarantine I grew weaker and weaker waiting on my results. Meanwhile, my son recovered and was as healthy as ever. I felt as though I was on my last days. Nothing worked. I tried all the home remedies, all the vitamins but was still sick. It was only then I realized God was reaching out to me.

I began to pray without ceasing and reading my Bible. I haven't read my Bible in years and upon doing so I came across a text that said: "Ye shall serve the Lord your God and he shall bless thy bread and thy water, and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee." (Exodus 23: 25). God is my refuge and my strength and I will continue to trust in him and thank him for spared life.

The Pandemic

Delva Gray – San Diego College of Continuing Education

When the pandemic started, people probably were scared and worried. However, for us Christians, we just have to have faith and trust that God will carry us through. One way we can overcome this is by reading God's word and praying. Also, wearing a mask and distancing yourself. Plus you can take vitamins to develop your immune system.

My Faith Was Bigger than My Fear

June James – Adult Literacy Tutors Association

Since the Covid-19 lockdown, I started to have the feeling my job would be in jeopardy. I am not a frontline worker so I would have a lot of days home and no money would be coming in. Bills started to pop up and it took longer to pay them.

My husband was able to work most of the time but I like being able to help. Being at home while one of us was bringing in the money was a little hard knowing I wasn't able to help. My only chance of going back to work was vaccination. At that time, I was not able to get it due to the fact that my age group was not allowed to. I was still skeptical about the vaccine in the first place.

When it was finally available to my age group my neighbour, who is a nurse, encouraged me to take the vaccine. That was another struggle. Around that time there wasn't mass vaccination drives or anything. We needed to go by appointment. Since I was not a frontline worker, I could not place an appointment very easily. In spite of everything I was not frustrated. I had courage and I knew because of my faith and focus everything would work out by God's grace.

When I heard about the lockdown, it sounded like we would have been imprisoned but it turned out to be a blessing. I got more rest and I was able to spend time with my family. I started to receive more blessings than before. Money started to come in, bills were paid and there was always food on the table. So, I decided to give back knowing that no matter how hard a situation may look, by God's grace and with faith, I would make it. I did not just survive, I thrived and was able to help others.

Escape from Quarantine

Alejandra Tenorio – San Diego College of Continuing Education

Being stuck in the house was not fun. The minute they let us loose, I took the Coaster (Commuter Rail Service.) I rode the train to the end of the line and took this photo of Oceanside beach.



Three Haiku

Caroline Wang – Pleasanton Library Literacy Program

Budding Flowers

within every bud
lies hidden tender petals,
a promise of bloom

Path of Mystery

wander down a path
follow the colors and scent
wonder lies beyond

Golden Daffodils

Golden daffodils
like a fairy's flying skirt
dancing in the wind

Spring

Caroline Wang – Pleasanton Library Literacy Program



Learning Is for Life

Carmen Cheng – Alameda Reads

I was so surprised we had to participate in a lockdown in 21st century. I had lots of crazy questions blowing out of my brain, but I controlled my mind to accept this unimaginable hardship. I turned this unexpected moment in my life around.

First, I wasn't confident about using technology, but I needed to learn how to use Zoom. Alameda Reads opened up English classes using Zoom. I searched for the virtual tutorials on YouTube. After I watched the tutorials, I was able to handle it by myself. I felt fully confident to perform these skills at my job too. I surprised myself!

Second, I cooked more dishes for my family because we were completely stayed at home. Honestly, I wasn't a good cook and I was tired of cooking three meals daily. Fortunately, my two daughters gave me lots of help and support. They prepared the ingredients and washed the dishes. At that time, we had more conversation, and shared our ideas about food and other and many other topics. They are very much appreciated my efforts for the family.

Third, I decided to make life as normal as possible. I tried learning different things, such as calligraphy and yoga. I fixed my schedule so I could practice calligraphy regularly. It really made me more relaxed and peaceful. Yoga was another challenge for me. I needed to stretch my mind with some movement. I followed the yoga instructor on YouTube about thirty minutes a day. I definitely had more energy and brighter moods after practicing yoga.

No matter how long it will last, we absolutely tackled our difficulties with our family, friends, and community. We have proudly survived and are thrilled through these hard times.

My Tiny Roses Garden

Wen Chen – Santa Monica Public Library

During the Pandemic lockdown, I spent a lot of time working in the backyard. I took care of my Navel orange tree and my lemon tree. I was a very social person before we had the lockdown and started quarantine restrictions I was bored. I started working in my garden. I learned to observe the climate influences on the fruit trees daily. Because of the California drought, I hardy watered my tiny rose garden that I planted in my side yard. I brought the roses from Trader Joe's several years ago. They would not blossom for a long time. Visiting the Santa Monica Farmers Market I asked one of the gardeners why he did not have roses for sale. He told me roses need a lot of water to grow. I decided to recycle the water from washing my vegetables and fruits to water my tiny rose garden. Many colorful roses started blooming. Soon, I had a beautiful tiny rose garden, I have purple, yellow, red, pink roses. After the dinner, I cut my roses and put them in a tiny pink glass vase, I used pastel and ink to draw them on my notebook on my dining table. I did not have a teacher to show me how to do it since classes were limited because of Covid. I created my own style of flower drawings, I have gained my confidence to be a good artist. Many of friends like my style of art, some offered to buy them. This is a way to improve my drawing skill by doing what I like. Now I know how to improve my drawing skill by doing a little item at a time, no stress to start big drawings. I am going to draw the human body starting with the toes, hands then the whole body. I think it might be a way to improve my figure drawing skills. Before the pandemic happened, I was not sure I could be a good artist. I wonder what is my artist statement all the time. Liz was introduced by Cristy to join the Cintya's Zumba class during the pandemic. She used to work at a gallery in New York. I started showing her my artworks and hoped she would critique my artworks. She said Michelangelo's art belongs to the church, but I am a wife, a mother, my art is full of life. I have found the value of my artworks during the pandemic. I am thankful for Liz's encouragement.



I Am Still Here

Margaret Fudge – San Diego College of Continuing Education

Still with rugrats,
but they go to school now.
Stayed home,
but I feel comfortable here.
Go out,
but I always wear a mask.
Online classes,
but I learned how to go to school.
Painting,
I love to paint
Cat,
she is a good companion.

Still Here Alive and Famous!

Alejandra Tenorio – San Diego College of Continuing Education

It has been an adventure of a lifetime that started at the beginning of 2020; a virus took over our planet. It is still going on! But I am still here, and also my family is still here too. For the past two years, I went to classes online. On September 7, 2021, I went back to school in person three days a week. I just love to be able to see my friends and teachers. It is so refreshing to go out to places and be “normal.” Also, I love the six feet distance rule that keeps you away from people you do not want to see.

Now I am busy with school, and I am on two boards: **ISPEAK** and **San Diego People First (SDPF) Self-Advocacy**. I also went back to work at the end of February 2021. I have worked for AMC Theaters for the past four years, but we were closed for most of the pandemic. I am glad we are open again.

One good thing about the pandemic is I found out I love to write. It all started when my teacher asked me to write about what I love. For me, it is Halloween. So, in 2020, I wrote two books with the name **ALL YOU NEED FOR HALLOWEEN 1** and **2**. I am working on the third book that will come out October 2022. You can purchase them on Amazon. Because of my books, I was on the news several times in English and in Spanish. I am getting ready for the **SDPF** conference on May 6-7, 2022. I will be a speaker. I am going to talk about how my teacher and I put the books on Amazon. In my books, I have thirteen photographs that I took and thirteen stories or poems. They cost \$13 so you can see my theme here. I can't quit my day job right now, but I am having fun writing my books.

Art and Literature

Caroline Wang – Pleasanton Library Literacy Program

This year, Covid still makes us feel overwhelmed, disconnected and not empowered. In the time I spent cutting the Linoleum blocks or sketching the white flowers in front of me, I stopped thinking about the spreading virus, my parents who haven't seen me in more than two years. The process of creating, whether it is art or literature, is a kind of spiritual healing for me. Art helps me transcend my reality. I use art to inspire hope.



White Mums

Train Ride of Emotions

Norb Vilorio – Borough of Manhattan Community College
Adult Basic Education Program

Yesterday I was riding the F train going home from work like hundreds of people do every day, but to me yesterday was different. As I stand on my usual corner next to the door for a quick run to the escalator, I look to my right side and I see two ladies sitting there. One is older, and she looks like she could be my mom, and the other is very young. I don't think she is even twenty years old yet, but I notice she has a baby in her arms and she is breastfeeding.

Immediately I feel this rush of emotions in my body. First I feel so happy, it reminds me of when my son was a baby. He is now three years old. Still my baby, but not so small anymore. Then I feel sad that my baby is so big; wow time flies. I joke saying he is three going on thirteen; he is a smarty pants. I notice these ladies have a shopping cart full of cans, looking like they are collecting them to trade them for cash. They also have a really small stroller for the baby. I can't help but think that they are struggling financially, so I try to think how I can help them. Maybe give them whatever cash I have, but it is not much. Then I think I have all this baby stuff from when Matthew was small.

I can give them that, but what if they think I'm a crazy stalker lady? So I pause. I take out a pen and paper to write my phone number, hoping to get some courage and talk to these strangers. I'm in my head saying nooo, yess, noo, yess. This back and forth is going on for a few minutes all in my head, and the train opens the doors. OH no! I have to make a decision fast!! but they get up at the same time and they are trying to walk out the train with me, but they have so many cans and bottles that they have a hard time gathering all together and at the same time take the baby stroller to get out the train before the door closes and they miss their train stop. so I asked if it was ok to help them and they said yes please, that would be great. I jump back in the train so I can help them all the way to the street. When we are outside they thank me. We were about to part ways when I said to them, I have a few baby items, you might have a better use for them than me. My son is three years old and I don't need it anymore. Please take my number and give me a call over the weekend to come and pick them up. They take my number, thank me and say they will call. I feel great about this. So the weekend comes and I'm just looking at my phone waiting for a call or a text, but sadly nothing. I have all the baby stuff cleaned and washed. Was almost crying saying bye to the tiny socks and plush toys that were ours for such a long time, but Matthew doesn't even look at it

anymore. Wait!!! What if they think I'm that crazy lady and threw my phone number away? And just like that, I'm sad for the rest of the day. I didn't hear anything for weeks and I started to put the baby things away. It was making me sad. And then one day they texted "Hi, remember me from the train?" Yes, of course I remember. They asked when it was a good day to come pick up the baby items we agreed on. The following weekend they came and took the baby stuff, and I could not be happier! We agreed that every few months I will call them to come and pick up all the stuff Matthew is no longer using. They were so happy with all the baby things. They looked at it like it was new. As the walking away Lisa, younger lady, yes I know their names now, she says we don't have much and we are so very grateful for all this. I think we are on the path of a nice friendship.

Who Made a Difference?

Jacklyn Moreno – San Diego College of Continuing Education

I have many people who made a difference in my life. My mom taught me how to cook and clean house. Aunt Patti would watch television and play games with me. Marie Doerner takes her time with me for my vocabulary and reading skills.

I made a negative impact on my own life. I did it because I had a lot of hardships in my life.

I grew up because they would not let me give up when I wanted to. They wanted the best for me. During the pandemic, the same people have pushed me hard. They pushed me so I wouldn't give up. If they didn't, I wouldn't be where I am today. Thank You!

Helping Others in the Pandemic

Ingrid Murphy – Adult Literacy Tutors Association

I heard about a lady who was a single parent and lost her job like so many other persons. She had two teenage daughters going to secondary school. She had no money for transport for the girls to go to school. She also had rent to pay and no food to eat.

I put myself in her position and decided to help her. I bought her some foodstuff. I don't know her, but I knew she needed help with food for herself and the children. That was a blessing in disguise for her.

I thank God that I was able to help her. I am an old age pensioner but with the help of God I try to help others and also manage my money well.

The Two People That Had Influenced me the Most in My Life

Marcia Costa – Borough of Manhattan Community College
Adult Basic Education Program

There are two people that have a big influence in my life and it's for similar reasons.

The first one is my mother. My mother was very strong minded, and always so happy. In my 9 years old mind I saw her as an invincible magical person that could make others so happy and of course she made me so happy that I couldn't see myself without her. When she was alive we always woke up with her singing and the biggest most amazing smile. She would always make sure we were taken care of. She would make us breakfast and make sure to get us ready for school. We got so much love from her and learned so much from her kindness even if she was in our lives for a very short time.

I look so much like my mother and I'm so much like her in so many ways, it's scary sometimes. Just like her I'm always doing something for other people, even when it doesn't benefit me most of the time because I do it without thinking of the consequences that it will bring me.

I remember my mother always bringing complete strangers she just met to the house to join us for dinner because they were hungry and even sometimes letting people stay for the evening. Once she brought a woman with five children to join us for dinner because she didn't have food at home. We thought nothing of that and happily shared our dinner with our completely strangers guests. That was the way my mother was always giving even if she didn't have much herself she still found a way to give to others.

The other is my daughter who is a copy of my mother and me together. She's always giving her things away. My daughter is following the same pattern. Just like I learned from my mother she learned from me to give from her heart. She's always ready to help others like when she moved to Georgia and met a young woman with a toddler, as the woman told her that she was running from an abusive relationship my daughter didn't think twice. She welcomed this complete stranger into her home for many months till the woman had saved enough to have her own place, she even babysat the baby for the mother to go to work and cooked for everybody. She made a difference in someone's life without any expectations. That was such a beautiful act of kindness.

Molly

Wen Chen – Santa Monica Public Library

The best thing happened to me when I met Molly at Cintya's Zumba class at Mar Vista Park during the Pandemic. We all wanted to stay healthy by doing a lot of different exercises.

Molly told me she also goes to a Boxing class and enjoys horseback riding. I like to do more exercises like swimming and hiking. I want to have a slender figure like Molly has.

Molly always comes to class with a bright smile and a positive attitude.

One day, I asked her what her job is, she told me she is a writer and loves reading stories. She is a stand up comedy actress part time. I took a stand up comedy class several years ago, and I know how fun it is to perform in stand up comedy show. I told Molly about my comedy teacher Jonathan who has his students perform at The Laugh Factory and Hollywood Improv . Molly told me she took a stand up class at Westside Comedy and performed there as well.

I told Molly I had difficulty in finding the right word to describe my feelings when I am writing. She taught me to use thesaurus.com to find the right word. I was so happy that she solved my problems in finding the right word.

I came from Taiwan when I was a teenager. English classes are the most difficult for me because there are millions words, and I never can find the right one to use in my sentence. Now I am no longer afraid to face the word search. Molly gives me the hope to be a writer someday.

I wrote “ Birthday Gift Shopping “ and “ Flower Farmer George “ stories during the pandemic. I told Molly what kind of content in my stories and she laughed and she would love to read them. I was happy that she wanted to read my stories. I sent her “ Birthday Gift Shopping.”

She corrected my grammar by using my own words. She said to me that it is my writing and my voice. I can tell she really wants to help my voice in my style. I was very moved by her thoughtfulness in supporting my unique style of writing.

Molly became a grandma last year during the pandemic. We all feel happy for her, I can not believe she is a grandma when she keeps up all activities and with a slender body figure. She works for “ DoorDash” to earn extra income to

pay for her airfare to attend her grandsons birthday party in New York. She said, “if you use Door Dash, don’t be surprised if I am your delivery driver.”

She still smiles when she talks about this job. What an optimistic Person she is. I am so happy to meet her and I am Influenced by her positive attitudes in her developing career. She is full of life. She told me she got two film jobs in December. Her career is taking off and we all happy for her. I congratulate her for her achievements and she told me a friend told her “ Don’t Give up”. I admire how Molly faces her life challenges in a positive way. Molly is a star to me. “ Bravo Molly” you are an incredible actress in the life journey. I wish you the best.

Never Give Up on a Woman's Strength / Hard Work Pays Off

Doreen Sammy – Adult Literacy Tutors Association

When the pandemic hit in 2019, I really did not know what to expect because we had never experienced anything like this before.

I became very scared and worried for myself and my family. I lost my means of earning an income - I had been transporting school children. With this sudden loss I had to think quickly of ways in which I could work through this difficult situation. The bills were piling up and they had to be paid to avoid undue stress on me. I sat and prayed, then a thought came to me.

I took a little of my savings and I purchased a vehicle that needed minor repairs which I then resold to make a small profit. When my first car was sold, I felt very proud. I did surprise myself by being able to do all the mechanical repair work with the little knowledge I had of the trade. I continued to look for similar cars to purchase with minor repairs and did the same with them to help offset my bills.

My neighbour, who is a very good friend, was teaching in a kindergarten school but lost her job. What was even harder for both she and her husband was that they lost their jobs at a time when they had just started their family. Having a young baby made their financial situation even worse. I felt sad and sorry for my friend, so I took a little of the money from the sale of my first vehicle and donated it to that family.

I hope that this pandemic ends soon as it is really a financial strain on my family and friends.

Finding Strength in Covid

Anonymous – Adult Literacy Tutors Association

What surprised me during the lockdown was the carelessness of the people in my country. Many people refused to uphold the rules and laws of the country. People walked around without masks and didn't want to get vaccinated.

My country was under curfew for six months from 9pm to 5am. This meant citizens were prohibited from being on the streets during this time. However, they were still outdoors during curfew hours. Accidents were caused by people rushing home to beat the curfew.

I kept to myself and my family. That kept us safe and secure. We trusted in the Lord and prayed for everyone during the lockdown. My family and friends communicated through the phone. This is how we kept in contact with each other. I hope that we can take this situation and change our views and thoughts on life.

A Unique Experience for Me

Anonymous – Adult Literacy Tutors Association

What surprised me during the lockdown was that my significant other got retrenched. We were barely getting through the day. We had bills up to our throats. I decided to get a job to help at home. I came upon an ad for a job, and I decided to give them a call. I went for an interview. They told me that they had health and wellness jobs available. I was interested in them. They called me two days later and I was hired.

When I went to the job everything was fine until my employer told me what I really had to do. He wanted me to do things that were not right. I disagreed with the task that he gave me. He was persistent that I do the work.

I stood my ground and I told him that I was not doing what he was asking. I was scared also because of the environment. By God's grace I came out safely. I was traumatized and felt embarrassed to go home and explain to my significant other about the situation. I finally got the courage to tell him and he told me that I had done the right thing.

From that day on I started praying and things started getting better for my family. A lot of people helped us during the lockdown. I was grateful that I knew about God.

Interview with My Girlfriend

Matthew Szabo and Rachel McCreary – San Diego College of Continuing Education

Matthew has written articles for previous Women's Perspectives. This year, he interviewed his girlfriend, Rachel McCreary. She is working on her writing skills but finds dictating much more helpful. The following article came from an interview Matthew did with Rachel.

Everything has changed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since COVID hit, we couldn't do anything at all. We had to be stuck at home and do school online. Also, at the stores, we had to wear face-coverings or face masks.

My girlfriend Rachel says that she got vaccinated and her parents too. Also she stayed indoors and distanced by standing 6 feet away from others. Another way she got through the pandemic was by going to meetings for Jehovah's Witnesses and praying to our god Jehovah too.

Her father Marvin has multiple sclerosis, and her mother has a seizure disorder. It is hard, but they are making it.

Surviving the Pandemic

Karina Sanchez – San Diego College of Continuing Education

Some things I did to survive the pandemic were eating healthy, exercising and getting in touch with family and friends. They are the best things to do. It can be depressing just being home so taking a walk can help. I am that type of person who loves hanging out with my friends, but since the pandemic started, I don't go out much anymore. But I haven't lost communication with them, I call my friends once in a while. Then also, what helps me, is the online class I am taking. I am thankful for that class and for the teacher and her patience.

Finding My Strength in Covid

Anonymous – Adult Literacy Tutors Association

I spent some time in quarantine because of my irresponsible action. I attended my sister's birthday party after hearing the Prime Minister and the Minister of Health repeatedly advising to stay at home. It was not my intention to stay at the party. I was only going to drop off a cake. I had not seen my family in a long time. Seeing everyone together had me very excited so I stayed for the whole party.

Two days later my sister called because she had received a call from her son's school. A student in my nephew's class tested positive for Covid-19. Now both she and her son had to get tested immediately. Instantly I regretted attending the party. The only thing I could have done now was wait on their results. I didn't have to wait too long because they did their tests privately – so within hours the results were back. My nephew tested Covid positive and my sister was negative. That evening I got a call from a woman on behalf of the Ministry of Health advising me to go to the nearest testing location the following day.

The next day my brother and I went to the health facility in our community to get tested. The wait for us wasn't too long because we were sent to be tested by the Ministry of Health. I hated having the Covid PCR test done. Having the swabs put in my nose was very uncomfortable. Tears began to run out of my eyes. We also had to sign an agreement to be quarantined at home for fourteen days.

Tiger

Caroline Wang – Pleasanton Library Literacy Program



5 Things to Survive the Pandemic

Robin Flowers – San Diego College of Continuing Education

It is important to stay healthy during the pandemic. It is important to get lots of exercise and to eat healthy food. Stay 6 feet away and wear your mask. We want to survive this pandemic so we can live longer.

1. Walking and Running and Hiking

It is fun to do and you can focus on things you like to do.

2. Ice Skating

The reason why Ice Skating is fun is because you could meet new people and also they have live music.

3. Fitness class

It is fun because they have instructors to get people in shape. If you can eat healthy food as well you get a double bonus.

4. Swimming at Pools and Beaches. The reason why people love going Swimming is because people love getting in the water.

5. Get the Covid - 19 shot to be safe and also wear a mask near people.

Survival

Roberts – Adult Literacy Tutors Association

Since the pandemic started it has set me back a lot from work. Throughout the first lockdown it was all right. I had a little savings put aside for difficult times. After the third month a lot of businesses were still closed. Things started to get harder. The cost of living began to rise.

As the time got more difficult, I realized that I had to do something to earn a living. My previous job was at risk. It was in the entertainment industry. At this time the economy was going under. Jobs were hard to get and a lot of people were getting laid off. Then I began to look into the essential job market. It was very challenging. My struggle looking for a job was really hard for a couple of weeks.

But I must say thank God for family. I was given the opportunity to work in one of my relative's businesses to earn an income again so that I could continue to take care of myself and my family.

Positive Thinking Women

Wen Chen – Santa Monica Public Library

When the pandemic started, our Zumba teacher Cintya took us to the Mar Vista Park to have our Zumba classes. She is a single mom raising three daughters. I met a lot of old and new students from her other dance studios. Each of them was all dealing with stress from losing their jobs and how to make a living for their family. We came to the class to do exercises and stay positive thinking about our future. We brought our backyard fruits to share with our classmates. I made oatmeal cookies and fruit muffins for my classmates too. We all tried to support each other during the pandemic.

I met Lila several years ago. I liked to watch her dance. She was busy working and taking care of her grandson so she stopped coming to the class. I missed her dancing a lot because she is a good dancer. She had no job during the pandemic. Saray has three boys. She and her husband lost their jobs because the pandemic. I asked her and Lila where I could buy some Zumba fitness leggings. They told me they got their clothes from the “Good Will”. They told me they only paid \$3.00 for one piece of clothes. I gave Saray an idea to go Downtown to shop the wholesale stores leftover clothes for us. Because all the shops were closed, we could not shop conveniently. She brought us a lot of beautiful Zumba Fitness brand new clothes from the whole sale factory.

She charged \$5-7 for Leggings, pants, Tank Tops for Zumba dance classmates. I told her to hire Lila to be her model so we could see how it looked like on our bodies; since we did not have a fitting room in the park. Most of us were not in a perfect shape body, so we needed Lila to dress up for us. Lila liked to be Saray’s model to help her sell Zumba clothes. Everyone liked the price Saray offered us because it only costed a few dollars more than “Good Will” price.

Lila got a lot of beautiful clothes from Saray as her salary. Lila wears different Zumba Fitness clothes every day. We all felt happy to be able to dress in colorful fitness clothes. Lila became Cintya’s assistant and our class manager. Since Lila has become the model, we all noticed she is happier and more content than before. Lila always acted like a clown to make us laugh, so we felt happy and healthy in the class. Lila announced “Saray Boutique” on our group message Facebook page. They sell everything; dresses, funny T shirts and holiday T shirts for Easter, Mothers’ Day, International Women Day, July 4. She also sells banners and so on. We are positive thinking women and we have established our group to support each other during the pandemic.

Surviving During the Pandemic

La Toya – Adult Literacy Tutors Association

When the pandemic started it was scary for me because of the fast spread of the COVID-19 virus and the large number of deaths. The virus started in China and quickly moved through the world. When it got into Trinidad it was even more scary. It was home now.

I wondered what would happen now. How would I survive? I was laid off from my job and had to look for a means to survive. I thought about it, and I decided to have a food sale so that I could earn some extra money. My first time trying, everything was sold out and I made a good profit. So that was good. I got the will to do it again and my daughter and niece helped. We did a great job together. It was kind of hard, but we did it.

I went to the drugstore, and I bought what I could. Things like Vitamin C, and things for pain and whatever else that I could buy because I have a daughter who gets sick very easily. Once there is a minor illness, I can handle it at home.

I thank God that I am still here and that I have food on my table, a roof over my head a place to sleep and I can do things. I have good people around me and the opportunity to learn to read and spell with my two very nice teachers in the ALTA Programme.

During the lockdown I could not go out as I wanted to. I had to wear my mask and to sanitize my hands. When I went anywhere there were long lines. I expected the people to listen to the guidelines that the government had put in place for their own safety, but some did not.

A Couple of Blessings

Natalie Jackson – San Diego College of Continuing Education

The thing I've been most surprised by during this lockdown was that everyone needed to stay indoors the whole time. I was really overwhelmed and devastated by that. However, good things did happen. A couple of blessings that came from this pandemic was learning to make new meals and to use zoom.

I'm really passionate about meal prepping and cooking. I come from a talented cooking family. My mom and my sister were my free house chefs before I learned how to cook myself. During the pandemic, I learned about portion sizes and healthy eating. It would be good to get a job in culinary arts so now I feel really confident in myself since I took the food prep class. I will continue to take that class. Eventually, I would like to get into a culinary program.

I've also learned how to use zoom for my college classes, extra activities and organizational work. One class I take is health and wellness. This has helped me come out of my shell so that I can speak for myself. Zoom also let me join activities like Taekwondo, music therapy and sometimes yoga. I learned how to collaborate for team projects like writing a newsletter.

During this pandemic, I found strength in learning. I am growing up as a young adult and having to do everything independently. This helped me mentally and emotionally so that now I've been helping and supporting my whole circle of friends throughout this pandemic.

Survival

Susan – Adult Literacy Tutors Association

At the beginning of the pandemic, I lost my job, and I did not know how I was going to survive. Now it is almost two years later, and we are still here. I have survived and I will continue to do so.

I started taking roti orders so that I could earn some money to pay my bills. I was happy. I was getting a lot of sales and I was useful to a lot of people when many of the businesses were closed. I am hoping for the pandemic to be over soon so that everything will return to normal.

Recently food places opened, and I lost some of my customers. It is very challenging and scary not knowing what the future holds.

I think now that I can survive by using my skills and by taking small catering orders. I believe that I am a resilient woman, and I will do what it takes to survive.

Difficult Times

Wendy John – Adult Literacy Tutors Association

I have been surviving life with Covid-19 with God's protection because I follow all instructions both at my home and when I go out.

It is a very difficult time and continues to be like that especially when there is a lockdown. I am the only provider at my home so when I stopped working there was no money coming in. Thank God I was able to serve my son and myself a meal.

The bills were another part of my struggle. I did private jobs and was also fortunate to get a job for two weeks through the Unemployment Relief Programme (URP) so got some relief from the government.

Covid has touched my life in every way. I lost my step-father to cancer and my aunty to Covid along with a number of other persons who I knew throughout my lifetime. This pandemic makes me frustrated. It also makes me look at life differently. Life is precious and is easily taken away. I was able to learn new things and do some self-care.

I continue to pray for a world free of Covid. Too many people are hurting.

My 18 Months at Home

Dorothy Brobbey – Borough of Manhattan Community College Adult Basic Education Program

My name is Dorothy Brobbey. I am 19 years old. I attend P721x 655 Samuel Gompers High School. My experience during lockdown was positive.

My 18 months at home were a blessing for me and my family. When everything shut down I was scared and filled up with uncertainty. With the help of my family I learned how to be more independent, but my family was always there for me through difficult situations. During the pandemic I got to spend some quality time with my family. Over the Summer break my family and I went to different places. My mom, my sister, and I went to my cousin's first birthday. At the party we danced, we played, ate cupcakes, candy, jollof rice, spicy kebab, cake, fried rice and talked. Getting to see my family was very emotional for me because it's been a long time since I have seen them, especially when they live in another state or country. On July 24, my sister and I went to Six Flags with my church. At Six Flags we ate a lot of food and went on fun rides. We went on the merry-go-round, Superman:Ultimate Flight roller coaster, the Jolly Roger ride, and the Twix Twister ride. My family and I went to Yonkers to buy food and clothes. My family and I went to Westchester Simon Mall to look around at different stores and bought clothes, a backpack, shoes and ate frozen yogurt. My brother bought my mom Gucci shoes for her. On August 21, it was my sister's birthday. My cousin, my sister, and I went to Bay Plaza to get our nails done. We ate frozen yogurt and went out and ate at Dallas BBQ. My brother, my sister, and I went on a ferry boat ride. Spending time with my family was good, because it helped me calm down my emotions.

During the lockdown many people lost their jobs and couldn't feed their families or pay their bills. During the pandemic there were unemployment benefits for people. So they would have to qualify for Employment Insurance Benefits. When people couldn't pay for their bills or buy food the federal government would give a relief package. The relief package is when the government gives money to businesses and families who don't have money or need financial help. Due to the pandemic in a lot of countries, school closed, remote learning, and being quarantined has left American teens having to deal with grief, trauma, and loss that is causing them to lack in school and the inability to see their friends or relatives in person or participate in activities.

During the lockdown, the year was challenging for me. I started my current school in December of 2019, and schools were shut down in March. I had to get used to attending school remotely and communicating with my teacher using technology, which was new for me. However, I have had lots of support from my teachers and family members. My teacher Mrs. Ramos has supported me this year because she helped me with my writing, reading, and math skills. She would challenge me to become a better writer by correcting my mistakes and my grammar. She taught me how to communicate and work well with others. Mrs. Ramos also gave me the skills that I needed by teaching me how to write a resume for a job application, finding the area of a Triangle and Rectangle, writing a report, writing checks, how to use a debit card and credit card, withdrawal and deposit money, identifying money, how to read a schedule, how to write an email, and how to a persuasive essay. My brother has been very supportive and encouraging. He motivates me to never give up when things are difficult for me. My brother is there to communicate with my teachers. He makes sure that I am healthy and happy and that I have everything that I need. My mother has been very supportive. She would confront me when I am going through tough situations at school or home. She would ask me about how I am feeling when I am depressed. She would sit by my side when I needed her most. When I come home from school and I am doing my homework and I don't understand, I get upset and mad. My mom would tell me to try my best and do the ones I know. She would motivate me to never give up. She pushed me to the top so that I can be successful. My mother has sacrificed her love and care for me. Because of her I wouldn't have made it in life.

My experience with remote learning was okay, because when the learning was hard it was difficult for the teachers to help me. Additionally it was hard to see the teachers. A good thing about remote learning is that I was able to focus on my work. Another good thing was that teachers wouldn't give homework. A lot of kids who had disabilities were not able to see their therapists. Therefore, these kids were behind in their progress. Students with disabilities who weren't able to see their therapists felt upset.

During Covid-19 the pandemic was scary for me, because there were certain things I couldn't do. I was not able to go outside due to the illness. I couldn't go outside to see my relatives and friends. I couldn't go shopping with my mom and brother. I was scared of leaving the house to go grocery shopping for my mom. I was terrified of standing or taking a walk to get fresh air due to my sickness. I had to rely on my mom and brother to get me certain things like food, hair products, and clothes. Staying at home while being quarantined

made me feel like a prisoner and it was very boring. Something I learned was that the pandemic taught me to hold onto the people that make me feel best.

Covid-19 has affected all of us, including ourselves, our relatives, our communities, and businesses. More than 18 months since the pandemic started, a lot of children have lost their loved ones due to Covid. Weak health systems and child protection have collapsed. Too many families have plunged into poverty and become unemployed. Ways to help my community and other communities who are facing challenges during pandemic is to protect myself and others from Covid-19. As the virus continues to impact our daily lives, keeping yourself and others safe is more important. Following mask mandates, traveling safely, maintaining social distance, and taking the vaccine can help stop the spread of the virus. To help our local communities we can volunteer to support our community by cleaning up the neighborhood, planting gardens, and helping donate food and clothes to the community. We can donate blood to the Red Cross and other organizations who are in need of blood. To help our local community we can volunteer to check on our neighbors and family members who are living on their own, especially the elderly.

During the pandemic my family gave me the strength and courage to give me hope when I was down. They gave courage and hope to never give up. They taught me to strive and protect myself from the illness.

We Are Still Here

Jesse Gomez – San Diego College of Continuing Education

After two years of pandemic, I am still here, but I am thinking about those who I lost. My mother passed in September 2009 when I was twelve years old. I was sad, depressed and wanted to be alone. I lost contact with my friends and family. After a while, I learned to cope with it. I still had my dad and my sister. I played sports in high school. That helped with my sadness. Now I am here in college. I have my mom in my heart. I talk to her. She wants me to continue on.

Then last August, my sister, Briana, died in a car wreck. I think about her every day. She was a very strong woman. She was very verbal and independent. She blessed me to be an uncle. Briana had her bachelors in global international business and her master's in business administration. She was working on her second bachelor's in journalism. She spoke five languages: Hungarian, Japanese, Spanish and Arabic along with English.

As a Latinx woman, Briana was passionate about helping people who need help. She spoke for people without a voice. I am so lucky to have known my sister for this long. She will be remembered. I will continue my education. She wanted me to continue on with her work. I don't have her education or her passion, but she is proud of me even though we had our ups and downs as siblings. At the end of the day, I will always love my sister. My life is a dedication to her. We are still here to carry on the work that she started.

Untitled

Chastity Farone – HFM BOCES Montgomery County Correctional Facility

My life during this Pandemic was just as I lived it when I let my disease get the better of me! When a family member or friend would say “pandemic” or talk about it... It would hit me hard, scare me and make me feel like it was going to kill me or make me seriously ill! This is exactly what happens to me when I let my “substance/alcohol abuse disorder” take over, but I also become severely “sick” and often isolate.

I suffer from trauma, depression/anxiety and I also have PTSD. In a Pandemic they try to find the root of the cause, medicate/vaccinate if need be and/or we naturally... I will say in this case “pass away” due to this sickness/disease that we are enduring as a “world”. Much like my disorder, it’s either jails/death... and that’s where I am at today by the grace of God, I am blessed to be getting another chance at life, even though I am here... I am using this time wisely to further not only my education, but, I am also working on myself; soul searching and digging deeper to figure out the whys and ifs. Institutions, in other words for me ~ Rehab... Where I have also found myself twice in this lifetime. I know what I need to do I just need to use the tools I have been given and keep the fact in mind that this is a fight for my life each and every day! I attend meetings even being a single mother of 3 girls whom are my world and 1 terrorist lol, 2 year old boy and he is and will always be my everything! The only man I need in my life! Men, or should I say “the men that I am attracted to do nothing but, bring me down, abuse me and take advantage of me”. The “bad” ones, ya know!? I am reading a book right now called “Women Who Love Too Much” by Robin Norwood. This book has been life changing for many women just like myself who seem to love all the wrong men or men who have suffered from such things as childhood trauma just like myself. I find myself attracted again and again to troubled, distant, moody men, I find myself obsessing over men who are emotionally unavailable, addicted to hobbies, work, alcohol/drugs or other women while the “nice guys” seem boring. Maybe someday when the dear lord thinks I am ready, he will have my chosen one cross my path.

My “disease” also known as, “Substance Abuse Disorder” is similar to what we are facing as a world today... “Covid-19” is like what I live on a daily basis. For those of you who find yourselves also walking in my shoes or if you are still “using” please **DO NOT** forget that you are not alone and you do have a chance at life, give yourself a break! **“YOU ARE MORE THAN WORTH IT!!”** There is help, but, you need to reach out and accept the help and support. **Ready and**

willing to hand your life over to the hands of God for it has become unmanageable. Take it **“One Day at a Time!” “Today is a given, tomorrow is never promised and yesterday is history”**. With this disease though, you might not make it another minute. I am blessed to be able to be here this very moment and given another chance at life, not only helping myself, but, helping others and maybe potentially saving lives! My children are happy and they are what I put first today, after myself! You cannot help anyone until you first help yourself. My oldest daughter who will soon be 20, just made me a grandmother at the young age of 40. I spend my time loving them, doing what we enjoy doing as a “family” and that is exploring everything to do with the outdoors! **Today I can say that “recovery” looks good on ME!!!!**

Nothing but Love. I wish everyone nothing but the best! GOD BLESS!

Writing Tips and Checklists

General Tips for Student Writers

By Donna Jones

Donna Jones is a student leader who also loves to write. She has developed a workshop by students for students called "Writer to Writer." Donna was an Honors Award winner for *Women's Perspectives #1* for her essay "Better Self Esteem Can Create Better Health." She has participated on the Selection Committee since 2006. These are her suggestions for student writers who want to participate in *Women's Perspectives*.

There are 3 parts to writing.

Prewriting: a stage for collecting everything together

1. A good thing to think about before even getting started is to make a list of reasons for sending your writing to *Women's Perspectives*.
 - a. List the type of things that will stop you from sending in your entry. Sometimes when things get hard or people get upset with a project, they quit. I don't want to see this happen to you.
 - b. Now list what you will do if one of these problems does happen.
 - c. You can keep adding to these lists. Please don't let anything get in your way.
2. Pick the right time of day and place to do your writing.
3. Your brain is a muscle and it needs to get warmed up. This exercise will loosen it up: Just write whatever pops into your head. You can use a computer or paper. Remember your writing doesn't have to make sense or be correct. You can write, "I can't think of anything to write or I hate this exercise." Just keep the words flowing for 3 - 5 minutes.
4. Keep a notebook & pen handy during the day to write down ideas and thoughts. Also keep it by your bed at night.
5. Get all the things together that you will need for this project before you start to write (paper, pens, erasers, dictionary, thesaurus). So you won't have an excuse to stop.

GENERAL WRITING TIPS

Writing: a stage of organizing things and putting them down on paper

1. Review your notes. Remember you don't have to use all of them.
2. Always have a good opening sentence or paragraph. Something that will get your readers to want to read more of your writing.
3. Write from your heart. BE HONEST! Write how you feel. If you feel like crying then make your readers want to cry. Get your readers to react to your story.
4. Your last paragraph is as important as your first paragraph. You want your readers walking away remembering what you wrote. Don't leave them guessing. Remember how a good ending makes the movie good and a bad ending can ruin it.

Editing: a stage for making sentences stronger through tidying grammar and providing additional details to engage readers' attention

1. Put your story away for at least 24 hours. Then take it out, stand in front of a mirror and read it aloud. While reading it, ask yourself: does sound clear, does it make sense, did I put a comma where I took a breath? These spots are not always where commas go.
2. Give it to your teacher or tutor to correct it.
3. Give it to a different person to read. Someone, who you haven't talked to about this writing. Also, give her the call to write from WE LEARN. Ask her, "Does my writing make sense, does it fit the topic?" Ask: "How did you react when you were reading it?"
4. It may take several rewriting sessions before you get it the right way.
5. Most Importantly: Don't give up!!!!!!
6. Be sure to make a copy of what you wrote and file it away. It is something you should be proud of.

FINISHING YOUR WORK FOR PUBLICATION

Each year, WE LEARN receives many writings to consider for publication in *Women's Perspectives*. It is not possible for us to print them all, so the selection committee reads each writing very carefully. We make our selections based on the finished quality of the work (grammar, spelling, etc.). More importantly, though, we consider the "voice" of the student writers.

- Has the student writer told us something from her/his unique perspective or experience?
- Has the writer clearly expressed an opinion or told an interesting story or helped the reader to come to some new ideas or understanding?
- Has the writer thoughtfully addressed the theme?

We suggest that students share their writing with student colleagues. Perhaps students can create a peer-writing and editing group. Here are some steps to take in such a group.

1. Read your writing to your peer group.
2. "Interview" the listeners (students in the peer group). The writer should ask the listeners the questions, but not respond. The listeners should answer as full as they can in the moment. Here are some sample questions:
 - a. What words or phrases stood out to you? (Just the words, not the meanings)
 - b. What message did you hear?
 - c. What were you thinking or feeling when you heard this writing?
3. The writer can then listen to these ideas and make changes or re-write the piece according to the comments in order to make it closer to what the writer wants to say.

You can find other suggestions for peer editing work in Peter Elbow's book *Writing with Power* or Louise Dunlap's book *Undoing the Silence*.

We have created checklists to assist writers in creating quality writing worthy of publishing. In addition to the categories on grammar, there is a section for interest. While writing may be technically correct, it is important to note that the *Women's Perspectives* Committee must evaluate the “publish-ability” of a work. Consider these questions:

- Is it interesting or original?
- Would someone want to read this?

The hope of the committee is that students will use these checklists (one for essays, stories, and memoir, the other for poetry) to edit and prepare their writing for publication. Students may also want to ask a teacher or tutor about other kinds of writing rubrics they could use. A rubric is a set of guidelines used to rate goals or accomplishments.

Women's Perspectives Writer's Checklist: Essay/Memoir

INTEREST

1. Does the writing address the theme for *Women's Perspectives*? YES/ NO
2. Is the topic interesting? YES/ NO
3. Is the topic original? YES/ NO
4. Has the writer expressed something unique about the topic? YES/ NO
5. Are there enough details to paint a picture for the reader? YES/ NO
6. Are descriptive or rich words and vocabulary used to express thoughts? YES/ NO
7. Is the reader encouraged towards reflection? YES/ NO
8. *If applicable to the writing*, can the reader identify or feel the writer's emotions? YES/ NO
9. *If this is expository writing*, can the reader understand or be challenged by the writer's opinion or point of view? YES/ NO

STRUCTURE/GRAMMAR

1. Are sentences complete? YES/ NO
2. Are words spelled correctly? YES/ NO
3. *If applicable*, are paragraphs clearly defined? YES/ NO
4. Are the thoughts organized clearly and in a logical manner? YES/ NO

- 5. Is there sentence variety? YES/ NO
- 6. Is the correct punctuation used? YES/NO

Women's Perspectives Writer's Checklist: Poetry

INTEREST

- 1. Does the writing address the theme *Women's Perspectives*? YES/ NO
- 2. Is the topic interesting? YES/ NO
- 3. Is the topic original? YES/ NO
- 4. Has the writer expressed something unique about the topic? YES/NO
- 5. Are there enough details to paint a picture for the reader? YES/ NO
- 6. Are descriptive or rich words and vocabulary used to express thoughts? YES/NO
- 7. Can the reader identify or feel the writer's emotions? YES/ NO
- 8. Is the reader encouraged towards reflection? YES/NO

FORM/FORMAT

- 1. Can the writing be identified as a poem? YES/ NO
- 2. *If applicable*, does the poem properly use the stated form (e.g., Haiku) YES/ NO
- 3. Are words spelled correctly? YES/ NO
- 4. Are the thoughts organized clearly and in a meaningful manner? YES/ NO
- 5. Does the poem flow? YES/ NO

The impact of seeing your words in print is powerful. Adult learners need as many of those opportunities as possible. Student publishing is central to the mission of WE LEARN. We are proud of *Women's Perspectives*, proud to give learners the space to share their ideas, learn from one another, strengthen their confidence in their voices.

You're reading this journal, so we know that lifting up student voices is important to you, too. We ask that you help keep *Women's Perspectives* going by donating to WE LEARN.

DONATE TO WE LEARN

Board member Shellie Walters is an adult learner. Her inspiring words stand as the introduction to this journal. We'll close with her words, too:

As a student I became a member of WE LEARN and then wrote for Women's Perspectives. The confidence I got from being a member led me to getting my AA degree. I would encourage everyone to donate or become a member of this organization to help others like me accomplish their dreams.