

## A4TD's Nugget of Knowledge

#9 – June 19, 2020

### **Greetings Everyone -**

This is our 9<sup>th</sup> Nugget of Knowledge. When we began writing these, I didn't anticipate that in late June we would all still be grappling with the effects of COVID-19. It was naïve to think otherwise, of course, but sometimes it is comforting to think of "denial" as only being a river in Egypt.

This pandemic has resulted in an unsteady loss of "normal" – a loss of the activities and people that for so long routinely defined our days and our lives. Personally, without the presence of those people and activities that usually kept me grounded, I feel sometimes like I'm on a rudderless boat floating at sea.

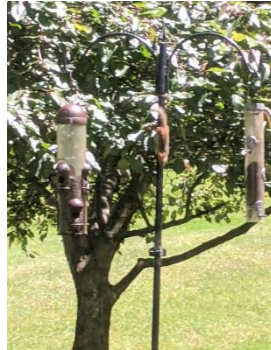
Paradoxically, loss in itself is a normal experience, but it is a hard one. The challenge is to find solid footing that helps us to keep moving forward in the face of loss, instead of being stuck in the present and mourning the losses from the past.

For many of you, this may be similar to the life experience that brought you to SCSEP. Some of you were no longer able to - or no longer wanted to – continue doing the work you were doing. For others of you, life circumstances changed and you needed to return to the workforce. Unsettling circumstances caused an upheaval, and SCSEP provided you an opportunity to reinvent yourself and your future.

Every challenge has its opportunity, and COVID-19 presents the opportunity to all of us to reconsider what we want in our lives and the kind of future we might want to create as our "new normal". Yet, it is hard to move forward without a vision of where one is heading, and it is safe to say right now that it is fairly difficult to envision the future through the clouds and craziness of the moment. In fact, I doubt that today even Miss Nancy from Romper Room (remember her?) would be able to see her special friends "Carlos and Ramona and Ronald" in her magic mirror.

So, lacking a solid vision for the future, can we embrace its possibilities with any degree of optimism, hope, energy or excitement? I believe we can, if we are willing to consider the possibility that the future can offer life experiences that will mean as much as those in our past. It comes down to attitude and choice. For me, when I'm feeling rudderless, I can hold an attitude of mourning – mourning the loss of hugs with my grandkids and visits to friends and family out of state. Or, I can choose an attitude of gratitude for all that has been, and an attitude of hope for what is to come.

So here's the message I'd like to leave with you. In this time in our history when there are so many challenges for so many people, and inspiration is hard to come by, sometimes the best we can do – and maybe all that we need to do - is move just one or two steps forward and see what happens. Any forward movement has the potential to foster little life shifts. And I believe these little shifts will help that attitude of hope to follow.



Like my little chipmunk friend, he just keeps moving forward. Sometimes he backs down a step or two, and sometimes he is holding on for dear life, but ultimately he keeps moving onward and upward. After all, to paraphrase the ancient Chinese proverb – a journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step.

***Read on and enjoy.***

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### **Some Important News To Share . . .**

At the time you enrolled in the SCSEP program, you should have been told two things:

- 1) That the maximum amount of time an individual could be enrolled in SCSEP was 48 months. This is called the “durational limit”. AND
- 2) That our goal for program participants was for you to receive great training that would help you obtain employment within 12 months. (Therefore, it was very rare that participants would reach this durational limit.)

We recently received important news from the U.S. Department of Labor about the durational limit. The federal CARES Act that was enacted on March 27<sup>th</sup> in response to the COVID-19 outbreak requires – in part - that the durational limit period be extended.

So, whether you:

- were already a participant in SCSEP on March 1<sup>st</sup>; or
- enrolled into the SCSEP program some time during the six month period of March 1 through August 31, 2020; or
- exited SCSEP after March 1<sup>st</sup> because you reached your durational limit of 48 months; or

- had a durational limit date between March 1<sup>st</sup> and June 30<sup>th</sup> and were placed on paid leave according to our emergency protocols,

you are now eligible for a one year extension of your durational limit.

**The maximum period for enrollment in SCSEP has been extended from 48 months to 60 months – from 4 years to 5 years.**

We think this extension is appropriate given the effects of the COVID-19 public health emergency and its impact on our program participants

As mentioned above, it has been rare for participants to reach their durational limit, and we expect it will remain rare as most participants get jobs within 12 months. Our program goal hasn't changed – which is to help you receive high quality training that will allow you to exit for a job. Please continue to communicate with local staff about how we can effectively support your job search process.

If you have any questions about this new policy, please contact your SCSEP professional staff person.

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#### **Some Reminders:**

- As things are slowly opening up, some of you are hearing from your host agencies about coming back. Please let your professional staff person know right away if your host agency contacts you.
- Our emergency protocols that provide paid sick leave remain in effect, so participants who have not yet been able to return to their host agencies for training will continue to be paid;
- Even though you are on paid sick leave, this is a great time to be working on your resume, cover letters, references, computer skills training, etc. Pay special attention to our Training Tidbits for ways to enhance your job readiness.

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#### **Another Fun Resource . . .**

In a previous Nugget we told you about “Duolingo”, an app for learning a language. Another cool and free website (and app) that is easy and convenient to use for learning a language is Memrise. It doesn't stop with languages, however, as the site encompasses many other topics as well. Part of what makes Memrise special is that it integrates games into the learning materials, mixing learning with entertainment.

You do have to set up a Memrise account with a user name and password, but it is simple and free! Check it out at: <https://www.memrise.com/courses/english/>

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Don't forget, you can find information about how to keep yourself safe from COVID-19 on the website of the Centers for Disease Control:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>

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## **A Training Tidbit . . .**

Due to the restrictions stemming from COVID-19, more and more companies are conducting job interviews virtually, using online videoconferencing programs such as Zoom ([www.zoom.us](http://www.zoom.us)). It is expected that this practice will continue even after the pandemic subsides. Therefore, it is important to become familiar with Zoom and to learn best practices for video interviewing.

As A4TD has professional staff people located in five states, we use Zoom frequently to hold meetings. It is easy to use, and its basic offerings are free. If you are attending (but not hosting) a Zoom meeting or interview, you don't even need to have an account.

This is a helpful article for learning more about Zoom and how it works:

<https://www.businessinsider.com/what-is-zoom-guide>

### ***Here are some pointers for participating in a video interviewing, and for using Zoom in particular:***

1. Even though you don't need the Zoom app to participate in a Zoom interview, it is a good idea to download it so you can become familiar with it beforehand. Pay attention to how to turn your camera and mic on and off, and how to use the chat feature.
2. Try doing a trial run Zoom session with a friend.
  - a. Check for audio issues, like an echo. The Zoom audio echo troubleshooting guide is a helpful resource.
  - b. Consider using headphones. They improve sound quality and block out distracting noises.
  - c. How is the lighting? Be aware that sitting by a window may cause your image to be darkened and hard to see. Avoid putting a light source behind you. Try to set up the most flattering lighting angles.
3. Make sure the background behind where you are sitting isn't distracting or showcasing anything you wouldn't want a hiring manager to see. A neutral background is good. A home office communicates that you have spent time creating a space to work effectively.

4. Videos may freeze or become pixelated on Zoom. This may be due to a poor internet connection or if too many other programs are open on your device – especially those connected to the internet. Therefore, it is best to close all open programs. This also prevents the interruption of alert chimes or popups.
5. Sit in a room with a lockable door to ensure you aren't interrupted by others.
6. The interviewer will send you a meeting invitation containing an active link (called a hyperlink). Regularly check your email spam folder as these types of emails are often flagged as junk.
7. Don't try to look up information on the internet during the course of your interview. The interviewer will see your eyes darting around the screen or your hands clicking on keys. Give your full attention to the interviewers and the conversation.
8. Look directly into your webcam or phone camera as opposed to any images on your screen. This way you will appear to be looking your interviewer in the eye. You might try putting a piece of paper near or around the webcam (but not over it!) to remind you where it is.
9. Speak slowly and clearly. Pause before speaking in case there is an audio delay as you don't want to accidentally talk over the hiring manager. Wait until the interviewer has finished speaking before you say anything.
10. Remember, the interviewer only sees what is in your frame. Animated arm gestures can be distracting if they take up the entire frame.
11. Since your computer screen isn't visible to others on a Zoom call (unless you actively share it), you can attach a "cheat sheet" to your screen (but below the camera's view) to occasionally remind yourself of talking points or questions you may have.
12. Know where the mute button is and use it in emergencies, such as if you are having a sneezing or coughing fit. Also, mute if there is sudden and loud background noise.
13. If you are having difficulty hearing the interviewer(s), tell them so using the chat function.
14. With Zoom, you can enter a profile name that will appear onscreen. The best, most professional thing is to use your own full name.
15. Treat a Zoom interview like an in-person interview. Dress appropriately and professionally from top to bottom (no PJ bottoms). Bright colors, white, or all black clothing don't come across well on video.
16. Arrive early, but not too early – maybe 3 to 5 minutes early. Ideally the hiring manager will have set up a virtual "waiting room" where you will arrive when you log into the call. Some novices, however, use the same link for multiple interview candidates and don't set up the waiting room. Consequently, there is a small risk your arrival could put you in the middle of someone else's interview!
17. Finally, be sure the interview call is disconnected before you say or do anything!

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**Just for Fun . . .**

**Did you know . .** that the total population of the world could fit inside of Texas! Well, that's one way to manage the climate crisis.

Also, a baby porcupine is called a "porcupette"!



And a group of flamingos is called a "flamboyance"!



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**Here is a little quiz for you:**

***How many people have walked on the moon?***

And for extra credit – ***how many have traveled to the Moon more than once?***

Stay tuned for the answer next time. (Or feel free to respond back with the answer and you will get a shout out in the next Nugget!)

Last time I asked you **"Which of America's 45 presidents is enshrined in the Wrestling Hall of Fame?"**

**The Answer?** Abraham Lincoln. Kudos to Rick S., Jon T., Nancy W. and Helen F.

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**Another dose of life's little joys . . .**

Last time I told you about Neil Pasricha and his 1,000 awesome things. This reminded reader Pam S. from Connecticut of author Barbara Ann Kipfer – also from Connecticut. Over 20 years ago she wrote a book called "14,000 Things To Be Happy About".

So, in the interest of equal time, here are some of Ms. Kipfer's things to be happy about. I won't complain if you won't.

- Mexican banana baked with cream cheese, brown sugar, cinnamon, rum, and half-and-half
- when all the leaves that are going to fall have fallen
- self-taught artists
- giving people packets of seeds of your favorite flowers
- enjoying the company of small children
- restoring an old car
- preparations for the holiday
- flats of pansies
- days with only natural sound in the background
- sitting in a children's swing
- caramel cake
- houseplants that no one can kill.

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### **In case you need a break . . .**

If you want to practice taking those few steps towards a gratifying future that we talked about at the beginning of this Nugget, you might be inspired by this Ted Talk by Matt Cutts. Here he talks about the power of trying something new for 30 days.

[https://www.ted.com/talks/matt\\_cutts\\_try\\_something\\_new\\_for\\_30\\_days](https://www.ted.com/talks/matt_cutts_try_something_new_for_30_days)

You also may appreciate this video by Neil Pasrich (yes, that same guy from last week) talking about “The Three As of Awesome (attitude, authenticity, and awareness).

<https://youtu.be/uPE0G00XFV0>

A few little steps, a little bit of attitude, I can see your future getting clearer now!

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### **A Final Thought or Two . . .**

This weekend may find many of you celebrating one or two special days.

To all of you who observe it, I wish you a happy Juneteenth.

And for all of you fathers – or those who play a fatherly role in the life of another human or a fur baby – I wish you a happy Father’s Day.

I’d like to honor my own father by sharing a memory that we can all learn from. My father’s entire professional career was in education, first as a high school math and science teacher, then as a teaching principal, and then for 37 years as the founding superintendent of my school

district in Pt. Pleasant, New Jersey. Yet, despite his long-term job security, he always read the want ads. For 25 years after he retired (he passed away at age 95), he still read the want ads. His philosophy was that he just wanted to see what else was out there that was interesting. He never stopped considering the possibilities for his future. In fact, in his early 90s he was talking about writing a “Statistics for Dummies” book. He had lived through the uncertainty and turmoil of the depression, World War II, and the 1960s – yet through it all he managed to keep looking forward to the possibilities of the future.

I wish the same for you.

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### **Ask A4TD . . .**

Finally, remember that if you have a comment or a question for A4TD, “reply” to this message and share your thoughts or questions.

***Until next time, may you take a few steps forward and begin to find an attitude of hope and optimism about the future – and maybe even begin to create a vision of your new normal Be safe, be well and remember that A4TD is walking this journey with you.***

***Sincerely,***

***All of us here at A4TD***