Women's Perspectives

Issue 21: Women and Change

Women's Perspectives **is an annual journal of adult education students' writing.**

WE LEARN
Empowering Women Through Literacy

Women's Perspectives #21

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

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Women's Perspectives #21

A Journal of Writing and Art by Adult Learners

2026

Women and Change

Do you like change?
What tips do you have to help others deal with change?
What can make change easier to cope with?
Should you embrace change?
How have women's lives changed over time?
How did Covid change lives?

Through personal stories, poems, and essays, students addressed many aspects of what success means and how they have achieved success and are working toward their ideal success. We hope this collection of writing will encourage and inspire all students as they have inspired us. These writings are a beautiful example of amplifying students' voices and supporting women's literacy.

WE LEARN
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http://www.welearnwomen.org
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WE LEARN received writings from students across the United States and Trinidad. They represented a range of topics and writing ability. This issue features writing and artwork. In choosing work, the selection committee 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.

2026 Selection Committee

Geraldine Cannon Becker, Maine

Marie Doerner, California

Stacie Evans, New York

Jaye Jones, New York

Jessica Ramos-Bahena, California

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

San Diego College of Continuing Education	San Diego, California
Literacy Services, Carlsbad City Library	Carlsbad, California
Adult Literacy Tutors Association	Belmont, Trinidad

A Note about Some Terms

For readers who are not familiar with adult literacy terms, here are explanations for some acronyms that are commonly used.

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 Spellings and 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. We respect all of the writers' choices and their desire to maintain their privacy. Some words use British spellings, which can be a bit different from American English spellings. The word "neighbor," for example, changes with the British spelling to "neighbour."

Note from the WE LEARN

In last year's journal, we invited students to write about food, to write about our varied relationships with food, with feeding others, with cooking, with passing down traditional recipes.

This issue is the 21st issue of *Women's Perspectives*. Twenty-one years of students' writing! We asked students to think about change, about how the respond to change, about how their lives have changed and how women's lives have changed over time. We asked students to write about their relationship to change, what events, or decisions, or people had changed their lives. What changes have they seen and how have those changes impacted them? What changes still needed to take place?

We hope you enjoy reading the different ways students wrote about success for this issue.

Our hearts continue to be with people around the world who are living in desperate situations – situations that seem to change daily, situations we sometimes feel helpless to change. None of us know how the future will unfold. We can stand together, however. We can care for and support one another. We can be in community. We know that our voices and actions together are powerful. Our hearts are with all of you, and we hope you are safe and healthy.

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.

Women and Change

Women's Perspectives, Issue #21

One Thing that Changed My Life, and an Update

Alejandra Tenorio – San Diego College of Continuing Education

Alejandra (Alex) has been writing for Women's Perspectives for a number of years. Recently, we found an essay she wrote about change in 2008. You can see it after this introduction. Then Alex wrote an update on her life and goals.

One Thing that Changed my Life – January 15, 2008

The one thing that changed in my life is going back to school after six years working at Goodwill Industries. I was not going anywhere with that job. Also, doing the same thing day in and day out got boring.

One day a lady came into the store selling Avon. Her name was Judy. I stopped her and told her that I wanted to sell Avon. She gave me the address, date and time of the meeting so I went and just loved it. When I got more into the business, I realized that I wanted more in life than working for a company.

I decided to go back to school to get better in reading, writing and math. The big thing I wanted to learn more was about computer skills. For a couple of months, I was going to work and going to school. It was too much for me so I quit my job and now I go to school full time. With the help and support of my family, I will do it. I am happy because I made a good decision in my life. This change will make me grow. Also, I will meet new people along the way.

I am doing my Avon full time. This is a job that someday I would like to see grow so that means I need to work hard in my studies. Avon is a good company to work for because you can make your own hours. I like this job because I can go to school and learn and make money with the people I meet. It's not going to be easy but with support and hard work I can have my dreams come true to open my own store. I know I will do it. Nothing and no one will stop me to achieve my dreams. This is a good opportunity for me to share my life with others.

I am changing my life slowly, but I am happy because I know I made a good decision. The job that I had was stressful and I got sick a lot. The people that I worked with were not nice. It took me six years to realize that I needed to go back to school, change my life and make new friends. I am going places in life and facing new challenges along the way.

*

Update on “One Thing that Changed my Life” – January 27, 2025

In 2008, I remember working at Goodwill for 6 years, then selling Avon. These jobs stressed me out, and I got sick a lot. Then I went back to school.

Now I work for AMC, the movie theater chain. I have been there almost 9 years and I love my job. They respect my time and my needs. I enjoy the hours I work plus I get free movies.

Also, I have published 8 books after being published in Women’s Perspectives. I enjoy writing and putting the books together. I was even on the News for my books. It gives me great pleasure.

I have saved up my money to do things on my bucket list. I have always traveled between the USA and Mexico, but last year I went to Australia. I saved my own money to do it. This year I went to Brazil. Canada is still on my bucket list. Also, I have finally paid off my house after 20 years. I have learned to work hard and budget my money.

There have been many changes between 2008 and 2025. I have grown a lot mentally. I am now wiser. I am doing more. I am an officer on the Board of “People First” and the Advisory Board of “WE LEARN.” I am glad that I quit my dead-end jobs and went back to school. Now I am changing the world. And still, I am going places in life and facing new challenges along the way.

How Covid Changed My Life

Susan – Adult Literacy Tutors Association

My life changed a lot in 2020. When COVID hit, I lost my job, and I had no money to pay my bills and to buy groceries. I could not pay my monthly installment for my car. It was very hard for me, and I prayed to God every day for help to pay my bills. The only thing that came to my mind was to start making roti and that helped me a lot.

After COVID my roti sales dropped. I had no other way to make an income. I applied for a job and did not get it. The owner of the business said I am over 50 and cannot get the job. I was very disappointed and did not know what to do.

I started to plant my own kitchen garden. I planted tomatoes, bodi, pimento peppers, green fig, plantains and hot peppers. That helped me a lot. I have two coconut trees, and I got coconut to make oil for me to cook as well.

I thank God for whatever I have, and I will never give up. I will keep going until things get better with me. At this point in time, I am getting a little roti orders on and off and sometimes I get pholourie orders as well.

Change in Attitude

Anita Edwards– Adult Literacy Tutors Association

Since joining ALTA, I've noticed a real change in myself. I began understanding things that once felt confusing, like how to break up words and spell them using syllables. Learning how consonants and vowels work together helped me pronounce words more clearly, and that alone lifted my confidence. Little by little, I started to feel proud of myself in ways I never had before.

A change that affected me deeply was simply deciding to stay in the class. In the beginning, I questioned why I was even there. I felt unsure and wondered if I should drop out. But I chose to stay because of my children. I wanted to learn so I could teach them too. My whole family felt the impact. My husband had to rush home to take care of the kids on class days, my children were excited because I could help them more, and I gained the joy of educating myself at the age of 35. The outcome was positive for all of us, and it bought a new sense of hope into our home.

I realised a change in my attitude toward the work was necessary when the lessons started to get challenging. I can't say whether it was easy or difficult, but at first it felt like a temporary fix just pushing myself to get throughout each session. Overtime, I understood that my attitude needed to shift if I really wanted to grow. I even found myself encouraging others to adjust their attitudes. At work, when someone spoke harshly to a co-worker, I pulled them aside and reminded them that sometimes it's not what you say, but how you say it. I meant it with good intentions, and they understood. That moment made me recognise how much I was changing on the inside too.

What helped me the most when dealing with these changes was communication and acceptance. I had to understand the purpose behind the change rather than fear it. Taking time to look at the pros and cons helped me see things more clearly. I learned to think about the bigger picture, not just my emotions in the moment. Once I accepted that the change was meant to help me grow not just as a learner, but as a mother, wife, and woman. I became more patient, more determined and more proud of the person I am.

Change

Alma Walker – San Diego College of Continuing Education

I grew with both parents being severely wounded people. Neither parent stayed around to raise me. They were divorced shortly after my birth so I bounced around from one house to another. Over the years, I lived in 17 different homes.

With my mother being an alcoholic and a chain smoker, she had me lighting her cigarettes at five years old. She made me puff on them so they wouldn't keep burning up. So, I smoked cigarettes from then on.

My father owned his own business: a nursery and florist. He would leave for work early, around 6am., and I would be left home with no food and no way to go to school. Even when he did send me to school, the kids would laugh at how loud my stomach would growl.

When I lived with my siblings the abuse continued. My oldest sibling kept me out of school from Jr High to High School to babysit for free for her and her friends. I was a gofer. I always had to go for this or go for that. I never had any self-esteem. It is very hard to love yourself, when no one else does.

I ended up addicted to cigarettes and drugs, but in 2013, I was tired of my way of living. I wanted more. It was hard for me to trust God because I had never learned to trust anyone.

I prayed to God to help me stop abusing myself and to find a church to help me change. Soon after that, someone knocked on my door. They were from a church and invited me to attend their services. I did go to the church and went through their Reformers Unanimous program. It helped me quit the drugs and cigarettes.

Then I went to school and finished my high school diploma at the age of 69. Still to this day, I thank God for changing my life. Since then I found out about my parents' stories. Life had wounded them badly and they passed those wounds onto me, but I am trying to forgive them.
I am building my self-esteem and learning to love myself.

Neighbourhood

Eagle's Wings – Adult Literacy Tutors Association

This is the twist and turn of a wonderful environment I left long ago, only to return to where I began, to a people who I knew had so much love for one another. Now the new normal is turning and fighting amongst themselves. Teenaged girls and boys are dropping out of school. Girls are getting pregnant before they reach the age of eighteen and young boys are liming on the block, smoking.

Long ago, it took the whole community to raise a child, but now the older folks are just as bad. They talk of one thing in front of your face and behind your back it's another thing. When you think things couldn't get any worse, the government took away CEPEP from those who can't read, write or spell. Boys are now looking for guns to rob, and girls are fighting over whose man belongs to whom. It grieves my heart to see what my community has become. This once peaceful neighbourhood has become a warzone.

Partying is now renamed "zessing", with people half naked in the clothes they're wearing. Is there no hope for our children anymore? God, we need help. It's music from night till morning and give them a chance, whole day as well. They have no mercy for the sick ones and talking is a waste of time as it falls on deaf ears.

I introduced them to ALTA classes but some of them don't want others to know they can't read. They don't want people to think they are "duncy" especially for a big man. I can understand what they're thinking and the shame they feel because I was once in that but trying to explain things just makes it worse. They think I'm trying to embarrass them.

I am moving out of the community next year. I hope I can help someone before I leave. This is the change I have experienced in our community.

Dealing with Change

Natalie Jackson – San Diego College of Continuing Education

When my parents divorced a couple of years ago, I went through a really dark time while I was transitioning and venturing out into adulthood.

Throughout my adulthood, I was really emotionally and mentally struggling with processing and expressing my thoughts, feelings and emotions about what I've been dealing with for the past couple of years.

In 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, my dad met another woman through work and they fell in love! Then both of them were dating and getting to know each other. When they found trust and wanted to take their relationship to the next level she moved into my dad's house, two kids as well. Dealing with "step" kids can be very uncomfortable.

So whenever I go there every other weekend, it's really difficult for me. Sometimes there is really negative energy which is completely overwhelming, disappointing and sensory triggering for me.

I'm currently starting therapy because it's been completely affecting me mentally. Also, I'm going to my first quinceañera for my dad's fiancé's daughter this coming weekend, so I'm going to experience some really mixed emotions there. Also, sometime next year, my dad's getting remarried. That will be emotional so I will keep up the therapy.

So that's my background story about how I'm dealing with change!

The Birth of a Mother

Irshavel – Adult Literacy Tutors Association

The news was unexpected, as she sat looking at the result of the test. It read positive.

Her thoughts raced with uncertainty, leaving her emotions in disarray.

As she sat there processing her situation, her mother's words quickly came to mind, "Count all things as good", and with that a decision was made.

Six months later while looking at her reflection in the bedroom mirror she **couldn't** recognize herself. For in **its** place stood an image of a waxing moon, showing the life that grew. The life that had her questioning if she made the right decision. The morning sickness was not easy to overcome and eating for two was a very big adjustment, especially when she was not a big eater.

Then one day she felt a sudden movement inside her which brought tears to her eyes and washed away any doubt she had. One hundred days have passed and as she laid in the hospital bed in excruciating pain and bewilderment, recalling her mother's words "Giving birth to you was one of my greatest joys", at that moment she just wanted everything to be over.

Then a strong cry filled the air bringing an end to her travail. A sudden wave of emotions came over her as she saw the nurse approaching. As the nurse laid the baby in her arms she knew this beautiful girl her life would never be the same.

Four Poems on Change

Elizabeth Baez – San Diego College of Continuing Education

My Bubble

Change can be hard when you are used to living in a "bubble."
My
bubble of unknown
where my secrets, scars, and the mask I wear
has made me
feel safe without, that's without, Change.
change means being an open book.
am i ready for change?

Begin with Self

change can only begin within myself
not being afraid of reality and facing fears
for change can be difficult for one
when you're used to living in a "bubble."

Missing Out

I don't like change but sometimes I think how much I might be missing out
can change be good i ask myself?
having the same routine isn't bad I tell myself…right Liz?
how can i prove otherwise without trying…hmmmmm

Safety

i live in a cycle where i feel safe without CHANGE
tell me otherwise…
prove to me Universe that change is Good.

The Status of Women

SR – Adult Literacy Tutors Association

The status of women in society has changed over time. In the past, women were often limited to household work and were not given equal chances in education or the job market. They had fewer rights than men and were not allowed to take part in many areas of life.

While challenges and gender disputes still exist, women's role has seen remarkable progress, with more women taking on leadership roles, pursuing higher education, and advocating for gender equality on a global scale. Today women play diverse and significant roles in society.

Women's changing role refers to the positive position and responsibilities in society particularly regarding their contributions to agriculture and the economy. There have also been increases in women's college enrollment and working outside the home.

Having gone through this experience myself as I grow older, I am becoming more aware of my situation every day.

It has been a difficult journey with many disappointments having started school at 6 years of age and left at 9 years of age. During my young life, I never knew the importance of having an education until I grew up.

Having no ability to fill out forms, take notes or take information had caused me to shy away from wanting to go out, but the time came when I had to become independent and was forced to do something to survive.

Now I have turned to ALTA to improve my literacy skills. Our teachers have been a great help by always trying to assist and encourage us. My thanks to them. Thanks to ALTA, I have learned and am still trying to improve myself by continuing to learn.

CREATE
CHANGE

A Promise I Made to Myself

Ann Marie – Adult Literacy Tutors Association

A change in my life that affected me deeply was the day I decided to join the online classes with ALTA. I didn't know what to expect, but I knew I needed to do something for myself. Balancing work and home were already hard, so starting ALTA V classes every Mondays and Wednesdays felt almost impossible. But something in me said, **"Try".**

At first, it was scary. After a full day of work, my body was tired, but my mind pushed me forward. Some mornings, I had to rush myself to quickly log into class with my heart racing. But each time I joined the session, I felt a little lighter, like I was opening a new door in my life.

The tutors were amazing, we read together, stumbled together, learned together and encouraged each other. Slowly, my confidence grew. A shy young man, in the class, started speaking more, and women became like sisters on the same journey. Our teachers reminded us that progress is possible, no matter how small.

One night, after reading over a paragraph without stopping, I felt tears in my eyes. I realized the change that helped me find my voice.

Learning to read better wasn't just a class, it was a promise I made to myself. And keeping that promise changed me in ways I never expected. Thanks to great tutors and wonderful women and men who decided to make that reading change in their lives with ALTA.

Jacklyn Conway and Change

Jacklyn Conway – San Diego College of Continuing Education

Jacklyn

Who is kind and patient

Who needs faith and love

Who adores Hank, Mom and Dad

Who sees cardinals signaling that all is well

Who is more confident with change than in the past

Who fears losing her Dad

Who dreams of coming back to her own house

Who thinks change is wonderful

Resident of Oklahoma

Conway

Prospect in a Changing World

Sita Mohammed – Adult Literacy Tutors Association

The status of women in society has changed over time. In the past, women were often limited to household work and were not given equal chances in education or the job market. They had fewer rights than men and were not allowed to take part in many areas of life.

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Women and Change – Resilience

Desiree Auguste – Adult Literacy Tutors Association

I had a drastic change in my education last year. I am a teacher at a secondary school and I was marking my papers in work and talking with my colleagues and my words were coming out jumbled. I was having a stroke and my colleagues took me to the hospital. On the 18th of June 2024, my life was turned upside down because of this stroke. I was otherwise as healthy as an ox and I didn't know the changes I would be in for. I could only say "no" after the stroke and it was very frustrating that I could not talk. I decided to go to a speech therapist – Nadita Maharaj, and she was my saviour. She diagnosed me with Aphasia - a disorder that affects how I communicate. It can impact your speech as well as the way you write and understand both spoken and written language. My evaluation was on the 27th June and my first session for speech therapy was on the 7th of July 2024. I had to relearn everything, even to write my name. Change is inevitable but I did not like this change. I resented the change but it was a humbling experience because I took so many things for granted. I still have trouble with Aphasia but I am getting better each day, I will not give up.

My family was a rock in my journey, my husband created some cue cards for me to communicate with. My sister, my daughter and my friend – Roxanne Hayling was making me stay on track with the writing and the speech therapy. By September I could do a little talking but not much, I was on sick leave until 02nd December 2024. The communication was getting better each day and on November 2024 I looked into ALTA and I began the level 2 courses. I thought ALTA would be a space for improvement as we did dictation very often and it helped my spelling. My reading aloud skills were most improved and it helps with Aphasia. My writing has improved but I was scared to write on the board and my students would write for me. Eventually I would sum up the courage to write on the board and I am doing an excellent job. My students were empathetic for my situation, not many persons would have that experience. I was not ashamed to go to ALTA because many of my students have trouble reading and writing. I would have challenges to spell and I would just ask how to spell something. My colleagues would not make fun at me because they knew what my situation was. One year later, I got bored doing level 2 and I told them I wanted to do the spelling program. I did the assessment and I got in. I took it up as a challenge because so many adults don't know how to spell. The biggest problem is my Aphasia, it still bothers me but I will continue learning and improving.

This experience was hard and frustrating especially with the speech. My mind will go so far but my speech limits me. I wish the Aphasia will go away. It is a gradual process and not a quick fix. I am a go getter but it is hard to go on sometimes. I will not have a defensive attitude towards my learning. I don't want to give up, I will keep learning and relearning. I have to accept it and make

the changes, who knows if it is God's purpose to make me go through this. God does not give you more than you can handle. I hope for the future I will become a guest tutor at ALTA and spread the word about it. I hope that my experiences encourage people to not give up and join ALTA. Whether you are just starting or relearning ALTA is the place for you.

Untitled

Jessica Ramos-Bahena – San Diego College of Continuing Education

Change is necessary in order to grow. Change is often uncomfortable, but with time you adjust. I am going to share with you techniques that help me cope with the anxiety that comes with change.

1. Belly Breathing- Think about it and breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth
2. Vent- Speak to someone you trust (your therapist, friend or family member)
3. Take One Day at a Time- Break it into chunks and take on one piece at a time.
4. Cheetah Exercise- Imagine something fast like a cheetah.
   Imagine it running so fast then hold up a stop sign in front of it and say STOP.

The Impact of Change

Shirley – Adult Literacy Tutors Association

The one change that made a positive difference in my life was getting two jobs. One is taking care of an elderly lady and the other is cleaning a house in Westmoorings. These jobs taught me responsibility and showed me that I am capable of managing real work on my own.

Taking care of the elderly lady made me become more patient and understanding and it made me realize how important it is to show kindness and respect to others. Cleaning the house in Westmoorings also helped me grow because it pushed me to be more organized, disciplined and focused.

Earning my own money gave me a sense of independence and pride and motivated me to work hard for what I want. These two jobs changed my mindset, made me more mature and I am grateful for the positive impact they are having on my life.

The Day Everything Changed

Desta Dythe – Adult Literacy Tutors Association

My life changed when I lost my brother. Our lives were going so good and we never thought that we would lose one of our family members. Losing my brother was the biggest loss in our family because he was the breadwinner. He provided for all of us. He had a tent rental business, Ceasars and Sons Tent Rental.

The hurt my mother and father had to go through was the worst of all seeing their first son pass away. That day I learned what a heartbreak was. We would never be the same again.

I look at life very different now. It humbled me to the point that I look at every little detail as very serious, for instance, helping people, giving to charity and honesty. You never know what life is about until you lose someone. When my brother was alive, we had everything. We were well taken care of.

In the beginning it was very hard for all of us like finding jobs to sustain our families. It was not something we were accustomed to but we got through by the grace of God. Now we are doing okay but we miss him so much. The memory is still fresh in our hearts. The lesson I learnt from this change in my life is when you are around your loved ones is to love them today like there is no tomorrow.

A Woman and Change

Laqwanda Lee – San Diego College of Continuing Education

Change didn't come to her all at once. It came quietly, in moments when she was tired but kept going anyway. For a long time, she believed being a woman meant carrying everything – being strong, never breaking, always putting herself last.

She learned to show up for everyone else, even when she was running on empty. She held her family together, wiped tears in private, and prayed in silence. Somewhere along the way, she forgot that she mattered too.

Then one day, something shifted. She realized change didn't mean she was selfish or weak. Change meant she was finally listening to herself. She began choosing peace over pressure, faith over fear, and growth over staying comfortable.

The biggest change was understanding that her strength came from God, not from suffering in silence. She didn't have to carry everything alone. By choosing herself, she wasn't breaking. She was healing.

Her change didn't stop with her. It created a new path for her children, showing them that love can be gentle and strength can be soft. She became the woman who changed the cycle, not by being perfect, but by being brave.

And in that change, she found herself: strong, faithful and finally, free.

Loss of a Mother

Shelly Ann Felix – Adult Literacy Tutors Association

I could never have guessed that my change would have come so soon. My mother was the strongest person I have ever known throughout my life. She had six children and dealt with family life with very little to manage the household.

I knew my mother was diabetic, but after the visit from the doctor and news she had cancer, this was new. I saw my mother's face shattered. It was like all her strength left her. This was no easy pill to swallow but we had to face it.

I called my supervisor on my job requesting to work nights, so I can have the day to go with my mom to St. James Hospital. This adjustment was hard coping with working nights and hospital visits by day. My mother always felt sorry for me, because I was going with her every day, but I would always reassure her by saying "I'm fine mummy don't worry about me."

I could see she was worried about me instead of herself - that is the way of mothers, always worrying. The cancer was progressing very fast and my mom started to get sicker. All I could do was make her comfortable until her life was over.

She passed away two years after getting cancer, and up to this day I miss her dearly. I can still hear her voice and see her laughing. I know she is in a better place now.

Two weeks after the funeral, I was the woman of the house. Which means taking up all the responsibilities that my mother did. I hated housework for sure, but now I don't have a choice. This was new to me, getting up, cooking, and readying myself for work at the same time. As time went by, I got the hang of things and I now strive in my new role.

Change Is Good

Dian – Adult Literacy Tutors Association

One thing I learnt about change is that you can accept change or you don't accept it. As for me, I have had a lot of changes, but this change was drastic. It happened when I moved from the place where I was born and grew up, to a place where I knew no one. This was when I moved from my hometown of Diego Martin to country side Talparo.

My name is Dian and this is my story. It all started when my family moved from Diego Martin to Talparo. What a distance it was taking children from the one place they knew, and it was change due to a family dispute. When we got to Talparo, there was a big difference in terms of transport and of course I don't drive so every day we travelled.

Eventually I was able to enroll my children in Talparo RC School. That change in itself was a big ease for the children but for me, I had to continue the journey because I worked in Diego Martin. This change allowed me to meet new people and though it was drastic it was a blessing. I attend the Seventh Day Adventist Church and I was indeed lucky to have neighbours who were also Seventh Day Adventists.

Country living is beautiful. There is fresh air, lovely neighbours and the smell of food on every occasion. They have gatherings when there are births and even deaths. Neighbours gather together to mourn with those who lost loved ones. I have lived in Talparo for more than 20years. I now work in Arima as a housekeeper and I also have a small business called "Dian's Nuts, Cake and Pastries for all Occasions".

My life has changed and I accept this change. I now have adult children, three of whom live with me. I rear common fowls and I enjoy taking care of my pet dog, Jet. I sometimes plant a kitchen garden.

I now have time to do something for myself and this is where ALTA comes in. I heard about ALTA on the television and I always thought it was for people who cannot read. My sister, who is a lecturer, encouraged me to join and I told a friend who also joined. ALTA helped me to be a better person. I now spend less time filling out forms because I now understand you need to pay attention and follow instructions carefully. I am fond of my teachers, Mrs. Sandra Laidlow and Mr. Carlos Alexander who make learning fun. They made a change for me.

I look forward to Mondays and Wednesdays to reach home for class. I no longer spin like a mother hen looking for chores to do. I now take time to sit for two hours with my classmates whom I hope to meet in person someday.

My name is Dian and this is my story. Change is good.

Changing of Semesters
Group Poetry – San Diego College of Continuing Education

Here are two poems from Mr Casey's Creative Writing Class.

Changing of Semesters

Fall schedule
Leaves falling on the ground
Running, walking, studying
Mr. Casey, Ms. Melissa, Ms. Christina, Ms. Marie
Writing, journaling, drawing
Busy, flowers start to bloom
Spring schedule

Time change

I hate the end of daylight savings
I love when it stays light longer
Time change causes
Anxiety
Sleep disturbances
Mental Health glitches
Mood swings
Can't Concentrate
Why can't time change go away?

Painful Surprises That Changed My Life

Sharon Phillip – Adult Literacy Tutors Association

A change in my life that affected me deeply was losing both my mother and my nephew. There are some moments in life that change you forever. Moments you don't talk about easily, moments when you stand in the middle of your own life and whisper, "how did I get here?" I did not expect either of those losses and they came as painful surprises that change my life forever.

Losing my mother broke a part of me that I am still learning to rebuild. She struggled with her own life and even though she was quiet and stayed to herself, she was still my mother. When she died it felt like a piece of my foundation disappeared. Then losing my nephew not long after made the pain even heavier. It felt like life kept taking from me without giving me time to heal.

These changes left me feeling confused, hurt, angry and empty. I did not embrace the changes at all. I fought them because they came with so much grief. It was one of the hardest things to understand and accept. But I know I will have to one day.

Even though the outcome was painful I can say the experience taught me a lot. It taught me that life can change in a moment and that we must appreciate the people we love while they are here. It made me stronger, more grateful and more loving. It pushed me to grow even through the hurt.

Here is what I have learned. Life will break you, but it will also build you if you let it. Strength is not the absence of pain. Strength is showing up even when the pain is heavy. Everyday I get up and thank God that I had them in my life and the memories of them will live on in me until I leave this earth.

A Change within Me

Miss Gopaul – Adult Literacy Tutors Association

I have noticed a change in my reading since I started attending classes at ALTA. I was not someone who liked to read, but now I am all excited to read any book I come across, most of all the Bible. I see reading as something I love and will always do.

One change that made a positive difference to my life was being able to start my own business and becoming independent. A really difficult change was the work that I am doing now, but I cope with it every day.

A change in life that affected me deeply was when I went to live at 14 Church Street. Taxis do not travel along that street which means I need to walk to my home. Garbage trucks do not come along that street as well. This means that getting home has become more difficult and disposing of garbage causes a problem.

I realized a change of attitude was necessary. I would always allow people to speak for me and make decisions for me. Even if am not pleased with what they say, I would still agree. So one day I said to myself, "No, I won't allow people to talk for me all the time. That attitude has to change". It didn't change overnight, but gradually I started speaking up for myself.

Being able to speak up to others and communicating with people has helped me the most when dealing with change. This has led me to be more confident and happier in myself.

Women at the Center of Change

Renata Leopold – Adult Literacy Tutors Association

Women have always been at the center of change, even when history did not fully recognize what women did. We have all the power that nobody else sees but we have to show that we have the power. Women have an important role in creating change.

When a woman learns to read and write with ALTA, she is gaining the tools to improve her own life before the lives of those around her. This is the most powerful change a woman can create. Women raise good families, make informed decisions and often become leaders.

In addition to public change, women transform the world in quiet, but powerful ways. Mothers, grandmothers, sisters and daughters create strong families, whom they support emotionally, and help change their values. When progress is happening in science, business, sports and community, women are there making the difference. Their voices, ideas and leadership benefits society.

Changes in Myself

Esther – Adult Literacy Tutors Association

Yes, I have noticed changes in myself since starting ALTA. I noticed that when I'm reading and I come across a word I can't pronounce, I use what was taught in class. I say the word and I figure it out without having to ask someone to help me. I've also started seeing things differently, for example, when someone is speaking and they pronounce a word incorrectly, I correct them from what I've learnt in class. I have seen a lot of changes within myself and I'm so proud. I'm becoming more confident with my reading and spelling.

I'm so glad that I made this change in my life to get the help I need to become a better person. Today we live in a world where education is very important. I decided to take this step in my life and embrace this change for me. This change came about one day, when I was sitting and thinking about my life. I asked myself, how can I better myself? Then I remembered coming across the ALTA programme on Facebook. I listened to individuals who gave their testimonies about the programme. I told myself I can do this. I decided to make this big change in my life for me. It was one of the best decisions I've made.

I'm really and truly grateful for this programme as it is helping me a lot. A special thanks to the teachers for taking their time and patience to teach the classes. They are truly wonderful.

My Tool Box

Nyla M. Henry – Literacy Services, Carlsbad City Library

I became an adult learner in my 40s. I struggled with reading, writing, and grammar. It has taken me a long time to accept that. I learned a different way and it was OK that me- the circle- didn't fit in the square. I was given what I call my own toolbox and the tools to comprehend. Life skills, reading, writing, and grammar. I had women and a few men that helped me throughout my time to believe in me and encourage me that it is possible to overcome and adapt.

How do I like change I DON'T SO MUCH, and change is a challenge that is very hard at times. To cope with it, start with easier material and focus on building habits. I need to slow down and take it step-by-step. Here are some tips I would like to share.

Keep it simple. Break it down into steps 1,2,3 and one careful choice at a time.

When you can, then add as you go. Set small goals. The only way to improve is by doing as much as you can to improve yourself and try to challenge yourself.

What can make change easier to cope with is knowing you can only control your actions and not other's and adapt the best that you can. Encourage a positive attitude in yourself towards growth, regularly interact with others, and think about what you have learned.

You may be ask can we avoid it, but you know we can never avoid change. You stop and think and take a breath. You just adapt.

Can you embrace it? You can embrace anything if you have the will, the power, and the knowledge of what you can and can't do.

I have had many women help me conquer the shifts in life.

There have been women in my life that have guided me and encouraged me. They always said what is the take away or what did you learn from it.

You may be asking, is change good? How do you adjust to change? Change can be good and it can be bad. It just keeps you on your toes and reminds you to follow your intuition and believe in yourself about when to be supportive and when to step back. It's all part of the process and just remember to go step-by-step and day by day.

ALTA Changed My Life

Patricia McBean – Adult Literacy Tutors Association

Since joining ALTA, I have experienced a meaningful change within myself. For years, I had moments where I couldn't fully understand or took longer than usual to understand what I read or what was being taught. I often struggled with reading or sometimes struggled to recognize a word and never understood why. Things that seemed simple to others were difficult to comprehend.

ALTA helped me see the reasons behind this. I missed many foundational topics in my early years, and those gaps followed me into adulthood and affected my ability to grasp important reasoning. Seeing this has been eye-opening, and it has allowed me to understand my errors with compassion instead of shame. As I learn the core principles at ALTA, I feel myself getting clarity and confidence.

I embrace change. I do not resist it because my mind becomes restless and overwhelmed when I'm stuck doing the same things over and over. One change that made a positive difference in my life was learning to take my time, slowing down, and staying fully present in the moment. This makes me appreciate what I am doing instead of rushing through it. I have found peace, greater focus, and clarity. I feel connected to what I am doing.

A change that shook me was realizing my goals felt stuck after I didn't pursue a hard-earned promotion. I had worked so hard for it. I was eager to earn more, build a better future. This choice touched every part of my life. It gave me cherished, precious time with my family and space to enjoy hobbies and life, but it also stretched the time I knew I had for my career growth, finances, and long-term dreams.

I realized I needed an attitude change when fear and self-doubt kept crippling my progress. I started to see those colleagues I trained with move on and they showed me the benefits of going forward. In the end I realized this and decided to start scared and move forward anyway.

The biggest factor that helped me cope with change was accepting that it was the right time to move on, even though leaving my comfort zone was hard. My attitude shifted slowly as I battled doubts, but that struggle helped me grow and become more aware that I could be an example to others.

Now I encourage others not to quit. You may question your path but keep going. Use prayer, talk to God, journal your thoughts, go jogging to clear your mind, but keep your eyes on the reason why you started. Doing what I was once afraid

to do can and has helped others who were in my position. Every journey begins with a first step.

My Journey

Florence T. Gomez – Adult Literacy Tutors Association

A personal change in my life occurred at the age of thirty-three when I decided to look for a job because the greater part of my wooden structure house was eaten by termites. To assist with building this new house money was needed. I spoke to my father and uncle, the two men that I looked up to, and they encouraged me. With no skill and limited education, I searched for a job and found none. My cousin Maria urged me to join the security industry and I took her advice and applied to two different Security firms. I was successful with one of them and began training. I became a Woman Security Officer.

After two weeks of training, I reported for duty. Many changes had to be made at home because I had to work three daylight and three night duties. My two children ages thirteen and eleven both attending secondary school had to help out with extra chores at home in order for things to run smoothly. This was a big change for them and for me because I was accustomed to being at home all the time doing everything. My first tour of duty, a twelve-hour shift ended and I had to continue duties for another twelve hours before going home. This discouraged me very much but I did not give up.

The two weeks of training I did was not enough to prepare me to deal with all the different situations I encountered. Being a woman in that field of work was not easy: getting late relief, transport problems especially for me living in a rural area, waking up at 3.30 a.m. every morning to prepare for my husband, children and myself, working twelve hours shift and more and returning home late at night. A great sacrifice for a wife, mother and working woman but my first salary was all the encouragement I needed. I had barely anytime to spend with my family and things started to get harder at home. We began to build our new concrete structure after my first year of work with my first loan from the bank.

My daughter, the eldest ran away from home on two occasions and had to be brought back home with the assistance of the police. My son dropped out of school in the early part of Form 5 because he was being bullied. I felt like giving up my job but I could not because I was owing the bank.

The job itself was frustrating. At times I would have to work twenty four hours or thirty six hours before returning home. As a woman working as an officer, you had to be tough to survive. Many a times I would have to stand up for myself against managers, supervisors and male officers. I know my worth and no one was going to bring me down. Sometimes I was sent to locations in hot spot areas

to work by myself. The people in these areas became my friends and the neighbours next door to where I worked became family.

A great change took place for me after nine years of working in the company. I was precepted and moved up the rank to Woman Estate Constable with an increase in salary. Things returned to a level of being normal again with the children. My daughter decided to do a course with the YTEPP programme and my son began to attend a trade school doing welding. My marriage was broken up by then.

In 2005 December, the location I was sent to work the night shift along with three other officers was held up by three armed bandits. I was beaten: seventeen 'planass' on my back and a chop on my forehead. The lone male officer was chopped on his hands and back when he tried to defend me. I was not compensated properly because the supervisor lost my medical documents and I did not have any copies and didn't know how to go about the process. The other officers left the job, but I stayed because I was owing the bank another loan. I was sent for a psychiatric evaluation and given one month leave. After returning to work I had to learn to use modern technology, the computer and upgraded cell phones because things had changed a lot.

I continued working and was well respected by my employers, clients and co-workers. I was rostered to work at the La Horquetta Government Primary School, where I spent five years. I became the netball coach for the school team because of my past experience playing netball in the club leagues in Trinidad and Tobago for many years. I realised a change of attitude was necessary towards people because I had to deal with high tempered, angry parents and children. I watched, I listened and I learned many things especially how to help people despite their situation.

During the COVID pandemic when the curfew was put in place, many nights the neighbours close to where I worked accommodated me in their homes to spend the night. That was because I could not get transportation to reach home.

I worked many different places, hospitals, health centres and children's homes, the airport and schools to name a few. I became the giver with Jehovah God's guidance and protection and Jesus Christ as my teacher, a humble but stern person. I made a lot of very good friends along the way who opened their hearts and home to me, children and parents who still remember me and would call out to me anywhere they see me saying "look we best security."

I completed the building of my house and I am proud to say that I am a homeowner. What helped me the most in accomplishing all this is the great Almighty God, the good people I met along my journey and the changes I made in my life. So, after working for twenty-six years on November 29, 2024 I made

my last tour of duty as a Woman Estate Constable and on December 01, 2024 I retired.

The next change happened with ALTA. I had always wanted to go back to school to improve my reading and spelling but never had the time nor the money. My very good friend Ms. Deann told me about ALTA in August and encouraged me to join, so I applied and was given an assessment. Two weeks after I received a phone call and was accepted in the Level 2 class. My dream had come through. It is the best decision I have made since retirement. I am now doing phonics which is something totally new to me.

This ALTA class has very good tutors who dedicate their time to all students. ALTA has also brought about a great change for me because not only am I learning to read and spell better but wherever I go and encounter persons who have trouble with reading and spelling I can assist them and also encourage them to join ALTA.

Overcoming Adversity – Embracing Change

Derriane Floyd – San Diego College of Continuing Education

Most of my life I ran away from education pretending that I didn't need a high school diploma.

“I'm doing okay without it,” I thought, until the lies caught up with me. Years later, I was stuck, unable to move forward in my life. I became stagnant for many, many years. One day I decided to change and do the thing I was most afraid of…math. I had to learn how to adapt to new challenges in my life and that came with more challenges and struggles including sacrifices. I've learned a lot about myself during this journey.

I came to realize that having a higher education is important to me. It doesn't matter about age. It is never too late to seek knowledge or reach a goal you always wanted. To my surprise, school became a safety net for me that I looked forward to each day: a place to escape to, a safe place for me that gave me purpose! I've had a lifelong battle with completing my education. I prolonged it because of fear. I attempted many times and I failed. I quit school every time. I felt defeated. “I can't do this math. It is too hard,” I told myself. I doubted my abilities for years until I met my math teacher, Sean.

This teacher explained in a way I could comprehend. I was finally understanding what once was a frustrating and complicated subject that I thought so negatively about for years. Sometimes it takes a special teacher to enter your life, encourage you and believe in your abilities. I'm a walking testimony that you can overcome fears one day at a time. With resilience and consistency, you can't fail. I'll be graduating soon…experiencing college in the future. It's all because I overcame my fears and embraced change!

Never be afraid to overcome changes in life. It's only preparing you for the final stage.
(Derriane created this image with online tools.)

Change in Myself

Krystal – Adult Literacy Tutors Association

Since starting ALTA I was able to help a woman fill out her form and I was proud of myself, knowing that I was able to help someone in need. It was a surprise to me that I am learning so quickly and I still have so much to learn on the programme. I have learnt in life that we all have to sacrifice in order to reach where we want to be.

I have noticed a great change in myself. Since starting the programme, I can pronounce words better. I have also started seeing things differently, I am communicating more with others and helping my kids with their schoolwork much better. I was not expecting the change to happen so fast. I will recommend ALTA to others. ALTA can help them the way they are helping me.

Thank you, ALTA, for helping me become who I am today. Also, a special thanks to my tutors, Ms. Amelia Mohammed and Ms. Jamelia Rennie for taking their time to teach us.

Adapting to Change

Sarah – Adult Literacy Tutors Association

Since joining ALTA I have noticed changes, for example knowing the proper sound the letters make and how to blend them, and the rule that makes certain letters make different sounds. Knowing all this helps me with my reading. I have always had difficulty reading, now I understand much better and see things differently.

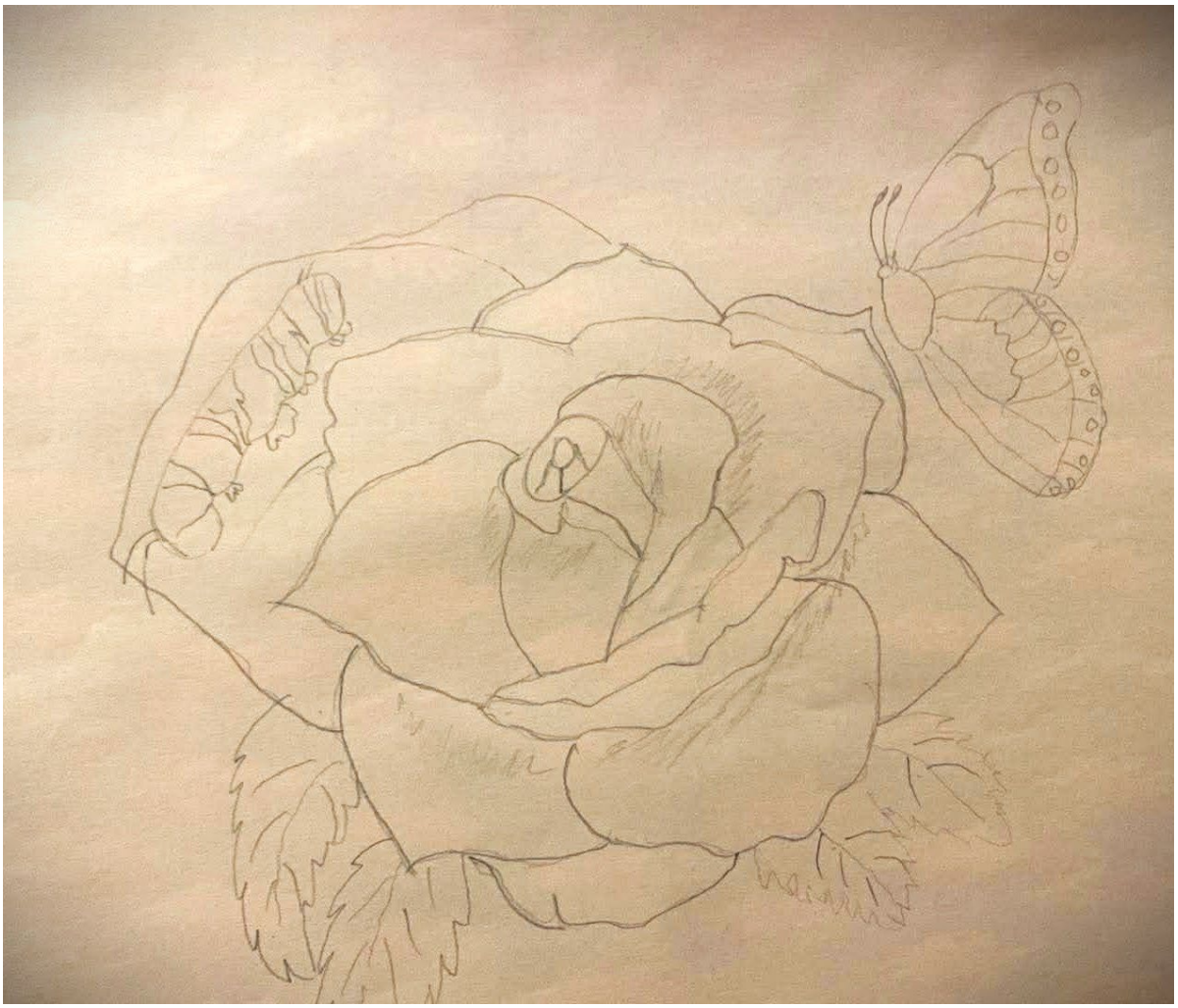
There are three very important things that made a difference in my life. I can't talk about one without talking about the others. Firstly, knowing who God is in my life, having my children and joining ALTA for the second time. The most difficult change was when I was told that my youngest is clinically deaf. There were signs, but they were all dismissed by doctors. Their main concern was speech. From 9 months to 2 ½ years all I heard from them was, "Mommy don't worry, it's speech delay." They were not listening to my concerns about my child who, even when in front of me, won't respond when spoken to. The diagnosis affected and changed the entire family, not just my youngest. Apart from my own challenges in reading and spelling, I now have a child who is deaf. My entire family had to learn sign language. So, what will a mother with reading difficulty do now? The only thing I thought of doing was, rejoin ALTA. I wanted to acquire the skills needed to enable my children to be the best version of themselves.

A change of attitude is necessary in any situation. We need to understand where we are and how the situation is affecting our daily life. My advice to anyone who may be in a challenging situation is to find someone they can trust, talk to them. My last piece of advice is for society, when people are in public places, like the doctor's office, the supermarket, or food courts, and there are signs clearly showing what, and where something is. When someone asks for help finding something, please don't respond by saying, "You can't read? It's right there." There is a strong possibility that person has reading challenges. It was done to me on many occasions. It was embarrassing.

Now, I am back in ALTA with a new motivation. I encourage anyone who has difficulty reading and spelling to join and learn these skills, not only for yourself, but to also help others.

Untitled

Robert Moreno – San Diego College of Continuing Education



Change Is Necessary

Khaatoon – Adult Literacy Tutors Association

I learned that change is necessary in life. We need change. I don't really like welcoming change much, but I understand that I must accept change to reach where I need to be in life. So sometimes we just need to accept change in our life.

The change I have noticed since I joined ALTA is my reading skills. I am able to read a lot better than before. I learned to break words into syllables which makes it easier to sound the word. Being able to sound the word helps me to understand what I'm reading and for me that's a great achievement.

My experience with change was a little tough for me, but God's hands in my life helped me to keep pushing through. Persons were affected by these changes, but I needed change in order to reach my greatest potential in life. Sometimes change would affect others in your life, but don't feel discouraged, instead put God in everything you do and allow Him to lead you.

When I found Jesus Christ, I realized I needed to give up a lot of things in my life in order to walk with God and be my true self. This also meant the way I treated others. A change that affected me deeply was when I had to give up a few friendships to find myself and my purpose. I had to give up many things but with God, it gets easier for me each day. With God all things are possible.

What helped me the most in dealing with change is knowing that I'm not alone. God is with me every step of the way. Knowing that God is with me, gives me the strength each and every day to become who He wants me to become.

The advice I would give someone dealing with change is to put God in everything and He will see you through. Stand and accept it with God.

Change in My Education

Hyacinth – Adult Literacy Tutors Association

Before ALTA I had difficulty in keeping up in school. I lived abroad for a while and had even more problems keeping up with classes and working. All in all, I tried my best to see my children were well educated because I didn't want them to experience what I went through. I had to make a lot of sacrifices to make time for learning while working and it was very difficult.

On my return to Trinidad, I saw the need to educate myself in order to support my husband in church activities. People who don't know my story usually tell me I have leadership qualities but I was not able to see that in myself because I couldn't read or write properly. One day someone in church told me she was attending an ALTA class in the library. I secretly went to the library to find out more about it and joined an ALTA online class.

Since joining ALTA I am able to understand compound words and use syllable division rules. I am making an effort to spend time learning the different sounds on my phonic cards and I am better able to understand and retain sounds. I realize I need to devote more time to my class work to see improvement. I also joined the library and borrow books to help in my self-development.

I know I couldn't do these things without the help of ALTA. ALTA changed my way of thinking and I am able to communicate better. My confidence has improved. I will like to be a motivational speaker for ALTA one day.

Change Can Be Positive

Group Poem – Adult Literacy Tutors Association

An acrostic poem by San Diego Continuing Education DSPS Creative Writing Class Fall 2025

Wonderful experience will change you.

Optimistic instead of pessimistic.

Mood can change but I persevere.

Embrace new possibilities.

New ways to learn and new you

Life Choices

Kanisha Douglas – Adult Literacy Tutors Association

One change that made a positive difference in my life is the decision to ask for help. This choice was driven by a deep yearning because I wanted better for my mind, health and spirit and to understand myself which I never did truly until now, little by little, every day and every hour.

Even though the journey to get there wasn't easy it was no doubt worth it. I faced moments where I had doubts, even fears and all those negative emotions which were part of the process to achieving self-care and growth. My most crucial action was the decision to seek a qualified therapist. I took this step without hesitation, noticing it as the ultimate investment in understanding myself and finding peace.

Through this therapeutic process I gained tools for daily living. I can look back and see the progress. I have taken the steps I need and I am proud of myself for moving through the challenges. This positive path confirms that maintaining mental health is a courageous, continuous process.

My Journey with Change

Jamie – Adult Literacy Tutors Association

Growing up in the countryside at the tender age of four, from which I can remember, we were always taught to keep tradition alive, never to change it because it won't be or feel the same as before.

Celebrating a cultural tradition like Christmas we were always taught to clean the house a little extra, change the curtains, last minute baking, shopping and much more which was all done on the day before Christmas.

Now, being an adult, I realize that it's very exhausting to try to keep up with this tradition, so I have decided to make a change and stay clear of all the last-minute rushing around. It actually makes a big difference because I am not exhausted on Christmas Day which allows me to embrace those special moments with my loved ones.

Another decision which I had to make was quitting school because of the financial challenges my parents were facing. Leaving school at the age of fourteen and starting my own business, which was quite successful for some years, was a blessing to me.

After some years went by, I met my husband and we started a family, so I had to make some changes in my life. In order to be a full-time mother I decided to close my business, which was a very hard decision to make.

After five years of being a full-time mother it was time for my son to start attending primary school. When he started going to the Arima Boy's R.C. School, it was the very moment that I was introduced to the adult literacy programme, ALTA.

At that moment I started to analyze myself and realized that betterment is needed in my life. So, the next day I was on my way to sign up for the ALTA class which was successful. I can proudly say that I am doing a good job being able to help my son with his schoolwork because of the ALTA programme, even reaching as far as Level 3.

This is one change that made a positive impact to my life because next year, please God, in June 2026 I will be writing the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate examination. I am thankful that I was introduced to the ALTA programme which has helped me to understand that it's never too late for changes in your life. Thank you, ALTA.

Lupita Yepiz

Lupita Yepiz – San Diego College of Continuing Education

I am Lupita
Who needs to learn more about the computer
Who loves my mom, mi familia and my baby, Frida
Who sees graduation in the future
Who doesn't like change very much
Who fears not being on this earth
Who dreams of having good health
Who thinks change is unavoidable
Resident of an apartment in San Diego
Yepiz

Adapting to Change

Joanne – Adult Literacy Tutors Association

Change affects me as a woman because it challenges my emotions, my identity and my strength. When life shifts, I sometimes feel uncertain and overwhelmed. For instance, when I got married I had to leave my parent's home to go and live with my husband by his parent's home. This included his siblings, cousins, aunts, uncles and grandparents and that was a lot to deal with. So, being part of that big family meant there were a lot of different dynamics confronting me each day. But these moments help me to grow and discover new confidence. It taught me to adapt and make brave decisions and to let go of things and people that no longer support my growth. This experience helped to redefine who I am and it pushed me to become a stronger and wiser, independent woman. Through my challenges, negative or positive, I learn more about myself and continue to evolve into the woman I want to be.

Random Thoughts on Change

Lupita Yepiz – San Diego College of Continuing Education

There are a lot of changes going on. I had a lot of thoughts about changes. What do you think?

Growing up: Growing up has made me understand and become more aware. Going to school and Creel Industries has allowed me to get more support. Going out in the community helps me learn and grow. School and mental health awareness helps with dealing with the changes in the world.

Body Changes: Changes in your body can be a little difficult because of the instant changes that are unfamiliar. Changes in the body can make you feel like you would rather be alone with your thoughts. But as we grow up, we change because we become wiser and we never stop learning.

World Changes: Changes in the world make it harder to go out with family as everything is now expensive. Changes in prices seem to me they have gone up. With the holidays, it can be expensive to buy food.

Service Workers: I was used to having guy social workers, but I had to change. Now, having a girl worker makes it easier and more approachable as women seem to understand me better.

Where to attend: Changing from workplace to remote or work from home. The big change is how many things began moving online such as work and school. It was a big change because I have never used email before, I had an email but never used it or checked it. It was a tough change because I had never had anyone help me navigate, I had to learn it by myself. I received assistance but nobody was there in person to help me navigate.

Advice: To help with change don't think about the past but think about the present.

Remember: Change is difficult because I do not like change. It is not easy for me but I know change is unavoidable. Try breathing exercises which helps with calming down.

Major Changes in My Life

Janet – Adult Literacy Tutors Association

I had an attitude problem. I used to think that I was right about everything. If you rub me the wrong way, I would fly off the handle and rain curses on you. I did not care who you were. When I was angry with one person, I was angry with everyone.

On several occasions, my husband spoke to me about my attitude. But as soon as he started to talk, that was it! I would not wait to hear him out.

Sad to say, that went on for many years until one day I asked my son, who was eleven years old at the time, to do something and he did not do it. When I asked him why he did not do as I asked, he was rude to me. I became enraged, grabbed a belt, threw him on the floor and started to beat him. He was crying in fear and pain and I was crying in rage.

My husband, hearing the commotion ran toward us and pulled me away from our son. I could have hurt him badly because of my stubborn attitude. Even then, I did not stop to think about what I had done.

About one week later my husband, my son and I were talking and my son said that if all parents were like me, they would end up killing their children. That statement was like a slap to the face. It made me realise that my bad attitude was affecting my son badly. That night when I was alone, I thought of what he had said and decided that I needed to make a big change. I vowed to make a change and prayed and asked God to please help me.

Needless to say, the change was a gradual one. I did not even notice it until one day I realised that things which got me angry in the past did not anymore. I was not quarrelling with my husband and son. I was a calmer person. I realised that acknowledging my negative attitude and making a conscious decision to change and praying constantly about it got the desired results.

Another change occurred when my husband got very ill. Firstly, he was diagnosed with cancer and had to undergo surgery. The surgery was successful, but a few years later, he suffered a stroke. That was very difficult for me as he was my rock, my Jack of all trades. Now he had to depend on me and others to do everything for him.

At first, I was depressed. I was always crying which led to my being hospitalised with panic attacks. But after speaking with my Minister, I began to accept my situation and soon embraced the added responsibilities that came with my new position.

My mother's death was also an avenue for change. She died suddenly without putting her house in order and that created a lot of confusion among her children about who would inherit her possessions. That made me realise that it was necessary to make proper arrangements for when we die and to let our family know our wishes.

I have had to make major changes throughout my life and I thank God for hearing my prayers every step of the way and for helping me to become the person I am today.

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*.

<u>There are 3 parts to writing</u>.

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

Together, We Create!

Amplifying Adult Learners' Voices
The Impact of Publishing Student Writing

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 are 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.*