

A New Year, A New Skill!

New research reveals why learning a new skill should top our New Year resolutions

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It's the New Year and time for a New You. Forget those fly-away resolutions to join the gym and get fit - a new study* commissioned by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) has revealed that nearly 70 per cent of people in London who have started a new job in recent years feel very or fairly good about their self-confidence, while over half feel similarly positive about their overall health, suggesting that this is the way to achieve the new, improved you!

With January a key time to start thinking about the future and planning ahead, this nationwide study shows that nearly a third of adults in the capital state that learning a new skill is high on their wish list of achievements this year, but that the fear of being too old to learn and money worries are holding them back.

The LSC offers an Adult Learning Grant (ALG) of up to £30 a week to adult learners to help overcome these fears. With a third of the population questioned in the study claiming that money is a limiting factor when thinking about going back to college, the ALG is designed to help with the extra costs that learning can bring.

Self-esteem expert and psychologist, Dr Gary Wood encourages adults to go out and pursue their dreams this New Year, claiming that the benefits of learning a new skill can give a far-reaching boost to all aspects of a person's wellbeing, whatever their age.

He comments: "Learning a new skill or getting a new job can really boost your self-confidence and inspire motivation to invigorate other aspects in your life, such as enjoying a healthier diet and lifestyle."

Mother of three Jackie Dent, who left a part-time job in school catering to pursue her dream of becoming a midwife, took a higher education access course at Stanmore College with help from the ALG and is starting her second term at the University of Hertfordshire, studying for an Enhanced Diploma in Midwifery.

Jackie says:

“It’s going very well. I’m really positive about my future, which looks so much better than it did a year or two ago. The change I’ve made in my life was the best thing I could have done. Taking the access course gave me the confidence in my abilities to go on to university. Now, I’m there, as well as the career target I have to work towards, I have a social support network of people in a similar position. And the whole process began with the Adult Learning Grant.”

Trevor Fellowes, Director of Learner Support at the Learning and Skills Council, says:

“The Adult Learning Grant offers learners a helping hand in education, it can be used to help with anything from the cost of books and materials through to childcare costs. The start of a new year is a crucial time to start thinking about your future opportunities, and the ALG is there to ease the financial pressures of these important decisions.”

If you are thinking about going back to college in September, now is a better time than any to start looking for a course to suit the new you. Call 0800 100 900 or visit www.learningdirect.co.uk and sign up today.

NOTE TO EDITORS:

Dr Gary Wood and Jackie Dent are available for interviews, as are a number of other case study subjects from around the country. Please contact Kate Lupton on 0207 413 3769 or e-mail kate.lupton@hillandknowlton.com for further media enquiries.

Dr Gary Wood is author of “Don’t Wait For Your Ship To Come In. . . Swim Out To Meet It”, published by Capstone, March 2008.

ALG is available to anyone over 19 who is studying full time for a first full level 2 (5 GCSEs at grades A* to C or an NVQ2 or its equivalent), or a first full level 3 (2 A levels or an NVQ3 or its equivalent) qualification.

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* Research conducted by ICM Omnibus, sample 1766, 18-65 year olds