**N00b Data Toolkit by Nana:**

**How I went from Broken to Job-Ready**

**by Cindy Duhon**

It was a Tuesday afternoon when he came in the bedroom, put his "going out" pants on, and started to get his wallet. I asked where he was going. When he answered 'The store', I was surprised because he went there yesterday, and I told him that. But he didn't answer me- he just left. Really left. By the next morning, he had taken the money in the bank account, and the car, and the retirement life after teaching for 25 years that I had become comfortable in. I had to borrow money from my daughter, get legal advice from HIS attorney son- I kept the house, but I had nothing- no job, no car, no self-confidence, and I was disabled. I was 59, abandoned, penniless, deceived, stunned, and afraid. It did not take long for me to realize that I was going to need to go back to work.

I had no misconceptions about what kind of work I could NOT do. I could never teach in a classroom again. As great of a teacher as I was, I could no longer stand on my feet those 6-8 hour days and keep up with the high energy of young minds as I should do. Besides, I WANTED something new, fresh. I applied for the Census, I signed up for Missionary work in Equator, and I started writing a WordPress blog. I applied for several grants for classes and for people with disabilities and for anything and everything that came along. I got into counseling. I went to Church and volunteered there. In about two months I felt better with time, rest, and no abuse. I realized he was a jerk and I was 100% better off without him. And I found out one of the things I had applied for came through! I had gotten a scholarship in Data Analysis from the Udacity-Bertelsmann Scholarship! It was an online global scholarship program where 45,000 students applied, and 15,000 were accepted- and I had gotten it! It was in a subject that had been my dream since my grad school- data and research! I loved stat and analysis, but had to give up pursuing a further degree because of family responsibilities. But now I was going to do it. Two birds, one lovely stone.

School in the 1990's and school in the 21st century are two different things, eh? Emogies’ and Video lessons and YooToobins and that Twitter deal. They have your StrataQuests and Mackathons and all kinds of Hullabaloos! It's enough to make me start missing my old Trapper Keeper.

Seriously, I realized something was wrong early on for some of the students who had not been exposed to the kind of cooperative learning environments in which learning is best done; where students share knowledge, engage during the learning process, and conduct peer tutoring. These students originally balked at the MOOC environment of the forum in [Udacity](https://www.udacity.com/). Possibly their schools had been structured in an older, more formal environment of individual learning and teaching. The Udacity-Bertelmann scholarship is competitive, in that demonstration of work completed, as well as participation in the learning environment is key to winning a spot in the second phase of the scholarship. These young students quickly were able to adapt to the environment and as they were able to get into the rhythm of the lessons and understood the forum concept, their panic turned into collaboration. One thing I know about smart kids, they are not about to give up on a scholarship. I had taught that way, so I already understood how it worked. I knew that model was EXACTLY how the world of work was today. And I wondered about other people, other women reentering school and work environments today. How would they be able to figure this deal out?

Which brings me my adaptation paragraph. According to a report by the Chartered Insurance Institute (2016),”The average divorced woman has less than a third of the pension wealth of the average divorced man”. This economic reality drives women, like me, back into the workforce sometimes unexpectedly. Yet that economic reality is that these women, like me are facing a different world that they left perhaps when they married, or even when they faced it with a spouse. However, the news is not that bleak for women. In fact, a recent comparative study indicated that women’s incomes tended to recover in the years after divorce (de Vaus et al. 2015). And in terms of recovery from divorce, men’s health tended to decline after separation, while women are generally better off in terms of health and subjective well-being (Amato 2000; Amato and James 2010). So, girl- the future is not so bad after all without him. Or her. But you don’t end up with culture shock, I will outfit you with what I like to call my N00b Data Toolkit. Just in case.

Before you even THINK about starting again in the workforce you have to have some training. Word of the day- EXCEL. No matter what you do, where you go, you are going to encounter a spreadsheet. Learn how to make one- for yourself, for the job, for taxes, for fun. [LinkedIn Learning](https://www.linkedin.com/feed/) has some really great lessons. If not, go to the source- [Microsoft](https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/). They will direct you if they don’t have training there. Don’t but a class if you don’t have to. And get in a forum, called a MOOC, and get used to it, and ask questions. Then start on the Microsoft Office Suite- you gotta have it. [Google Docs](https://docs.google.com/document/u/0/) is a must. The little dots in the top right hand corner of the Google screen and play around while you are watching TV one night, pull the bar down click on Docs. There are Templates for every possible creation on paper you would want, go back to the dots there are [Slides](https://docs.google.com/presentation/u/0/) and you can make a presentation. You can even put it on your Android phone. There are [spreadsheets](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/u/0/) there also. Like a Free treasure trove. There are classes on [Coursera](https://www.coursera.org/), [Udemy](https://www.udemy.com/), and a number of other great places- including Udacity that could train you to do what you need to do to get ahead and fulfill your dream.

Take a programming class. Even a little one. Java is good. There are tons of places that you can take a beginning Java or CSS programming course for free that would introduce you to the world of programming, [EdX](https://www.edx.org/) or even [LinkedIn Learning](https://www.linkedin.com/feed/). You have to, and the new boss will think you are smart because he never did. Start reading a few blogs or mags that have some tech information just so you become familiar with some terms. Medium.com is great because they speak English not geek; [Business Insider](http://www.businessinsider.com/) is a blog that doesn’t just cover tech, but many other aspects of the working world; and [CNET](https://www.cnet.com/) which is tech specific and where I get all my cool downloads. Bone up on your MATH and your SPELLING. No one wants to hire someone that can’t multiply or spell. And don’t even think there are machines for that. Go practice.

If you have a [Mac](https://www.apple.com/mac/) computer, go to the Mac site and take every free training class that they offer on the Mac site. Same with [Windows](https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/), same with [Chromebook](https://www.google.com/chrome/). There is no reason that you should be watching TV or going shopping instead of taking free offerings and making your future better. You hold the key in your hands. The world is right here on the internet. I have given you a few keys, go dig for the rest.

*Risk, Exposure and Resilience to Risk in Britain Today: Women’s Risks in Life an Interim Report*, 2016. The Chartered Insurance Institute CII, London

Leopold, Thomas, 2015. *Gender Differences in the Consequences of Divorce: A Study of Multiple Outcomes* Demography Online Crossmark

BTW- I am SO prepared and tech proficient at this point that I may end up beginning a prep class for N00bs. But in the meantime, I will finish my scholarship and I am going to need a job! Any offers?