

Your future in retrospect: embracing reinvention

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The timeline of my reinvention



HIGH SCHOOL

'89 – '93

“theater person who flunked chemistry”



Bachelor's Degree #1

Gender Studies & Linguistics
(UofC)

'93 – '97

“feminist misfit who dropped out of Calc II”

The Real World

'97 – '02

- manager at Crate & Barrel
- waitressing
- freelance lighting design
- house painting
- itinerary writing
- administrative assistant
- concerned citizen



**Director
myCHOICE
(UofC)**

**Community college
& Bachelor's Degree #2
(Rockhurst)**

'02 – '04

“returning adult learner”
Internship in Drosophila lab



**PhD
(UofC)**

'04 – '12

“why is she here?”



**Postdoc (UofC)
& biology 101 adjunct
(Loyola Univ)
'12 - '15**

Why I'm here

- ▶ I survived grad school...bruised, but breathing.
- ▶ I have faced personal & professional reinvention multiple times...clumsily at first.
- ▶ I design professional development and career exposure programming for grad students and postdocs.
- ▶ I believe that all PhD-trained scientists can (and should) embrace reinvention, regardless of their stage in career development or trajectory.



**Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again,
but expecting different results.**

~Rita Mae Brown, mystery novelist (*not* Albert Einstein)



So, why are YOU here?

- ▶ Feeling anxious about your preparation for life after training?
- ▶ Questioning your readiness to do anything beyond experiments?
- ▶ Hoping for some tricks to jump-start your process?
- ▶ Bored and needed a reason to get out of the lab this morning?
- ▶ *You suspect that personal reinvention is on your near horizon.*



Necessity is the mother of all invention.

~Albert Einstein



Two things that I ask from you:

1. Exercise objective retrospection
 - ▶ Press pause on:
 - ▶ scientific skepticism
 - ▶ self-doubt
 - ▶ pursuit of perfection
2. Permit yourself to explore a new, growth-focused mindset.



We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.

~Albert Einstein



What is objective retrospection?



I can't do math and chemistry. Everyone's right: I should stick to the arts.



Everyone's right: I can't do science. So I'll do something else and be unhappy.

I am at a total loss for what to do and I'm not trained to do anything relevant.

Everyone is watching me fail.



I think that maybe I know what I want to do, but I need to put myself through hell to prove to everyone that I can do it.



Everyone was right. I shouldn't be here. I'm a poser and everyone knows it.



Do what you love. Love what you do. Be good at it.

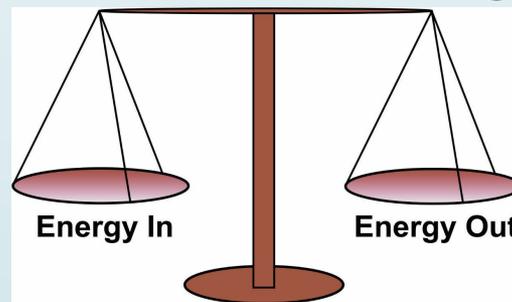


I have to do something and I'd like to be good at it.



STEP 1: Get comfortable with retrospection.

- ▶ Do you remember what you liked to do before you entered graduate school?
- ▶ What is meaningful to you?
- ▶ What inspires you?
- ▶ What gives you energy?
- ▶ What drains your energy?
- ▶ Can you identify beliefs or assumptions about yourself that are holding you back?



“ It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is most adaptable to change. ”

~Charles Darwin

Values card exercise

- ▶ You have 3 minutes to sort the 50 cards into two piles: 'necessary' and 'unnecessary.' This is not enough time to stop and think deeply. Just do it.
- ▶ Now take the 'necessary' pile and identify your top 8; put them in order of importance. You have 2 minutes.
- ▶ Form a group of 3 or 4. You have 10 minutes.
 - ▶ What was the most surprising thing that you learned about yourself through this exercise?
 - ▶ Which of your values align well with your scientific training experience and which conflict with it?
 - ▶ What lies between you and full implementation of your values?

STEP 2: Apply objective retrospection.

Acknowledge that who you are now is the accumulation of choices. Take ownership of future choices.

- Ask why you made the choices that you did.
- Identify influencing factors at each choice point.
- Do those factors still exist or have they changed?
- How has your scientific training changed you?
- Examine your beliefs. Overcome immunity to change.
(see "How to Overcome Immunity to Change" handout)

What are you good at? Does that align with what you enjoy doing?

- Use assessment tools (Meyers Briggs, myIDP, Birkman) to help you look at yourself more objectively.

“

People like us, who believe in physics, know that the distinction made between past, present, and future is nothing more than a persistent, stubborn illusion.

~Albert Einstein

”

Transferrable skills exercise

- ▶ Look at the list of transferrable skills. Check all the ones that you are currently doing.
- ▶ In your small group, discuss anything surprising. Help each other to identify ways to pursue skills that you aren't currently practicing.

“

Chance favors the prepared mind.

~Louis Pasteur

”

STEP 3: Adopt an encouraging mantra. Make it your password.

- ▶ "I can do anything"
- ▶ "Balance in all things = 2014"
- ▶ "Good things comes in small packages."
- ▶ "To learn we must become childlike again."
- ▶ "All time is precious!"

Actively reframe your self-conception.

Practice your growth-focused mindset.

Identify and adjust assumptions that hold you back.



**Let me tell you the secret that has led me to my goal:
my strength lies solely in my tenacity.**

~Louis Pasteur





STEP 4: Identify potential mentors.

Come to the seminar!

