

Learn the lesson | Christin Smith Myers

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Four years ago, I put all my hopes into getting a job for which I was not qualified. It was a job for a technical trainer that I wanted desperately the minute I read the very cool description. I didn't get it. I didn't even get past the phone interview. I was crushed.

When I talked about my experience with a friend a few days after getting the call the company was "going in a different direction," she asked a smart question: "What did you learn from the experience?"

That question pulled me out of my downward spiral. And it really made me think. Upon reflection, I realized part of why I wanted the job so badly was that the commute would have been fabulous. I also loved the job description, a sign I wanted to work at a really cool company doing cool things. I realized I wanted to prove I was up to the challenge even if I didn't have the qualifications they thought they needed. I took comfort in the fact that I had at least gotten a phone interview, during which they said, "You don't have the qualifications, but that was the most creative cover letter we've ever seen." And I learned I could take a big risk, fail, and still be okay.

Now when things don't go my way, instead of wallowing in self-pity, I ask myself what I've learned. Taking time to reflect on anything from a crummy weekend to a disagreement with my husband to the loss of a business opportunity helps me make the most of each situation.

I remember hearing Oprah say when something bad happened in her life, she'd always ask "What have you come to teach me?" I have asked myself that questions countless times since then. Of course, I've learned valuable lessons from things that have gone well too.

What lessons have you learned?