

With increasing unemployment making front page news these days, you may think your prospects for success this year are dwindling (particularly if you're already in the market for a new job).

Life's easier and opportunities flow more freely when the economy's on fire. But that doesn't mean that there aren't opportunities in a tightening market — they may just be harder to see. To wit: Henry David Thoreau graduated from college into a terrible depression that would last 5 years. The lack of opportunities pushed him into the “quiet desperation” of his family's pencil factory — fueling the lakeside economic experiment that gave birth to the country's greatest work of transcendental literature, *Walden*.

I don't want to downplay the experience of anyone who is struggling to find their next gig. I know its not easy. But when you get frustrated, go big picture: If you've got more time on your hands, or need a break from networking or your job search, what talents and ideas can you explore to create wealth (or at least happiness) in your future?

Sometimes an economic downturn forces people to invest in themselves — rarely a bad move. If you can keep a proactive, positive outlook, you can still move forward when the economy is stuck.