

Career & Life Planning

Career & Life Planning

HD208

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ISENSTEIN*

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This is an original Open Education Resource career planning book that incorporates many ideas and career development strategies not found in other texts. The text consists of a collection of articles and the authors’ original writings that address issues commonly faced by today’s undecided and exploratory college students.

Congratulations on choosing to take this course! You are probably taking this course to help you choose a major or a career (maybe your first career, maybe your next career!). The process of career exploration always starts by looking at the individual.

Over the term you will engage in the process of exploring yourself – your skills, personality, interests, and values. You will also learn how to assess which careers may be the best “fit” for you depending on your self assessment.

You will learn how to research those careers that are a good fit for you and finally, we will explore the process of decision making and goal setting.

As you proceed through the beginning of this class, you should be keeping a list of careers that match each of the topics. For instance, you will first be looking at values; as you progress through that lesson you should be able to identify some careers that fit your values and you will want to write those careers down. When it is time to start researching careers, you will have a list of careers to explore.

Career exploration is a journey. You will learn where you want to go by first researching yourself, then researching possible destinations, and finally, making plans to get where you want to go. Enjoy the journey!

PART I

Chapter 1: Career and Life Planning

Career and Life Planning – The *Why* + The *How*

Let's start by setting the stage for *why* career development and planning is important. Hopefully, this will give some context to the work you are about to dive into.

The *Why*

Career Development + Well-being

Well-being – what does that mean to you? Having a sense of contentment? Being happy? Experiencing more positive emotions than negative emotions? Feeling good? Healthy mind and body? Having less stress? Something else?

At this point, you may be wondering why we are talking about general well-being in a career and life planning class. If you think about it, an average adult working a full time job spends more time at work and with their co-workers than with their family (Monday through Friday). How satisfied we are at work impacts our overall quality of life. If we enjoy our work, we may be tired at the end of the day but we may also be *less* drained, burned out, and grumpy when we come home to our family.

Many benefits have been associated with well-being including “.. health-, job-, family-, and economically-related benefits. For example, higher levels of well-being are associated with decreased risk of disease, illness, and injury; better immune functioning;

speedier recovery; and increased longevity. Individuals with high levels of well-being are more productive at work and are more likely to contribute to their communities.” (CDC, n.d.)

Eight dimensions of well-being have been identified and guess what one of the dimensions is? Occupations! Yes! What is occupational wellness?

“Occupational wellness is a sense of satisfaction with your choice of work. Occupational wellness involves balancing work and leisure time, building relationships with coworkers, and managing workplace stress. An occupational wellness goal might include finding work that is meaningful and financially rewarding. Finding work that fits with your values, interests, and skills can help maintain occupational wellness. Consider your office culture and determine how supported you feel; if you discover you feel a lack of support, seek out support from others close to you and be sure to engage in recreational activities that can help balance out work stress.” (Roddick, 2016)

It is posited that there is even a connection between career health and spirituality:

“A hallmark of career development theory is the notion that finding a vocation that fits your passion, talents, and needs contributes to your overall wellbeing. This concept is certainly true in regard to mental and emotional health, and more recently this idea has been examined in relation to spiritual health. Finding meaning and connection in the work that you do, and a shared mission with the people whom you work with, improves job satisfaction, productivity, and workplace culture.” (Ohrt, Clarke, Conley, 2019, p.102)

Read below for more on this topic:

Your Career Well-Being and Your Identity

By Tom Rath and Jim Harter (Adapted from *Wellbeing: The Five Essential Elements*)

Do you like what you do each day?

This might be the most basic, yet important, well-being question we can ask ourselves. Yet only 20% of people can give a strong “yes” in response.

At a fundamental level, we all need something to do, and ideally something to look forward to, when we wake up every day. What you spend your time doing each day shapes your identity, whether you are a student, parent, volunteer, retiree, or have a more conventional job.

We spend the majority of our waking hours during the week doing something we consider a career, occupation, vocation, or job. When people first meet, they ask each other, “What do you do?” If your answer to that question is something you find fulfilling and meaningful, you are likely thriving in Career Well-Being.

People usually underestimate the influence of their career on their overall well-being. But Career Well-Being is arguably the most essential of the five elements of well-being. If you don’t have the opportunity to regularly do something you enjoy — even if it’s more of a passion or interest than something you get paid to do — the odds of your having high well-being in other areas diminish rapidly. People with high Career Well-Being are more than *twice* as likely to be thriving in their lives overall.

Imagine that you have great social relationships, financial security, and good physical health — but you

don't like what you do every day. Chances are, much of your social time is spent worrying or complaining about your lousy job. And this causes stress, taking a toll on your physical health. If your Career Well-Being is low, it's easy to see how it can cause deterioration in other areas over time.

Losing your identity

To appreciate how much our careers shape our identity and well-being, consider what happens when someone loses a job and remains unemployed for a full year. A landmark study published in *The Economic Journal* revealed that unemployment might be the only major life event from which people do not fully recover within five years. This study followed 130,000 people for several decades, allowing researchers to look at the way major life events such as marriage, divorce, birth of a child, or death of a spouse affect our life satisfaction over time.

One of the more encouraging findings was that, even in the face of some of life's most tragic events like the death of a spouse, after a few years, people *do* recover to the same level of well-being they had before their spouse passed away. But this was not the case for those who were unemployed for a prolonged period of time — particularly not for men. *Our well-being actually recovers more rapidly from the death of a spouse than it does from a sustained period of unemployment.*

This doesn't mean that getting fired will harm your well-being forever. The same study also found that being laid off from a job in the last year did *not* result in any significant long-term changes. The key is to avoid sustained periods of unemployment (more than a year)

when you are actively looking for a job but unable to find one. In addition to the obvious loss of income from prolonged unemployment, the lack of regular social contact and the daily boredom might be even more detrimental to your well-being.

You don't need to earn a paycheck to have thriving Career Well-Being. But you do need to find something that you enjoy doing — and have an opportunity to do it every day. Whether that means working in an office, volunteering, raising your children, or starting your own business, what matters most is being engaged in the career or occupation you choose.

Waiting for the bell to ring

Think back to when you were in school sitting through a class in which you had very little interest. Perhaps your eyes were fixed on the clock or you were staring blankly into space. You probably remember the anticipation of waiting for the bell to ring so you could get up from your desk and move on to whatever was next. More than two-thirds of workers around the world experience a similar feeling by the end of a typical workday.

To explore why so many people are disengaged at work, we recruited 168 employees and studied their engagement, heart rate, stress levels, and various emotions throughout the day. Before the study began, we collected data about each employee's level of engagement. We examined the differences between employees who were generally engaged in their jobs and those who were not. As part of the experiment, the participants carried a handheld device that alerted them at various points in the day when we would ask them what they were doing, who

they were with, and several other questions about their mood.

We also asked each participant to wear a small heart rate monitor. At the end of each day, these monitors, which were smaller than a quarter and attached to the chest like a sticker, were connected to a computer to download data. This allowed us to study the relationship between fluctuations in heart rate and various events throughout the day.

Saliva samples were also collected to gauge stress levels throughout the day (via the stress hormone, cortisol). Whenever the handheld device beeped and requested an entry in the electronic journal, participants were asked to spit into a small tube. The cortisol levels in the saliva provided us with a direct physiological measure of stress levels at various points each day.

After reviewing all of these data, it was clear that when people who are engaged in their jobs show up for work, they have an *entirely different experience* than those who are disengaged. For those who were engaged, happiness and interest throughout the day were significantly higher. Conversely, stress levels were substantially higher for those who were disengaged. Perhaps most strikingly, disengaged workers' stress levels decreased and their happiness increased toward the end of the workday. People with low engagement and low Career Well-Being are simply waiting for the workday to end.

The Five Essential Elements of Well-Being

For more than 50 years, Gallup scientists have been exploring the demands of a life well-lived. More recently, in partnership with leading economists, psychologists, and other acclaimed scientists, Gallup has uncovered the common elements of well-being that transcend countries and cultures. This research revealed the universal elements of well-being that differentiate a thriving life from one spent suffering. They represent five broad categories that are essential to most people:

- **Career Well-Being:** how you occupy your time – or simply liking what you do every day
 - **Social Well-Being:** having strong relationships and love in your life
 - **Financial Well-Being:** effectively managing your economic life
 - **Physical Well-Being:** having good health and enough energy to get things done on a daily basis
 - **Community Well-Being:** the sense of engagement you have with the area where you live
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Source:

Harter, J., Rath, T. (2010, July 22) *Your career well-being and your identity*. Gallup.

<https://news.gallup.com/businessjournal/127034/career-wellbeing-identity.aspx>

Career Development + Life/Work Satisfaction

Can you believe that only about 30% of workers are satisfied with their work?! And a whopping 70% of workers have been found to be either not engaged in their work or are actively disengaged. Given the importance that our careers have on our overall well-being, these numbers are not good.

Read *More Than Job Satisfaction* below to learn about about finding meaning and creating value in our work.

More Than Job Satisfaction

Psychologists are discovering what makes work meaningful — and how to create value in any job.

By Kirsten Weir

What do you do? That’s often one of the first questions people ask when they meet someone new — not surprising given that most adults spend most of their waking hours at work and that our jobs can influence our lives even outside the workplace. Our work can be a big part of our identity and offer insights into what is important to us, making it a rich area of psychological study.

Several recent studies have concentrated on a particular aspect of work: finding meaning in it. Through their research, experts have gleaned new insights, showing that meaningful work is good for the worker and for the company — and that even employees in tiresome jobs can find ways to make their duties more meaningful.

“Work can make people miserable. Losing work can make people pretty unhappy, too,” says Michael F. Steger, PhD, an associate professor of counseling psychology and applied social psychology at Colorado State University. “So are there ways to use work to improve lives?”

Building cathedrals

In a 2010 review, Brent D. Rosso, PhD, and colleagues noted that finding meaning in one’s work has been shown to increase motivation, engagement, empowerment, career development, job satisfaction, individual performance and personal fulfillment, and to decrease

absenteeism and stress ([Research in Organizational Behavior](#), 2010).

Unfortunately, meaningful work may not be the norm. According to State of the American Workplace, a new report by Gallup Inc., only 30 percent of the U.S. workforce is engaged in their work – in other words, they're passionate about their work and feel strongly committed to their companies. The remaining 70 percent of American workers are either “not engaged” or “actively disengaged” in their work ([Gallup](#), 2013). Gallup defines unengaged workers as those who are “checked out,” putting in time but without much energy or passion. Actively disengaged workers, meanwhile, act out on their unhappiness, taking up more of their managers' time and undermining what their co-workers accomplish.

That disengagement takes a toll. Actively disengaged workers, the report states, are more likely to steal from their organizations, negatively influence co-workers, miss workdays and drive customers away. According to Gallup, active disengagement costs U.S. companies \$450 billion to \$550 billion per year.

Of course, there are different ways to find meaning in one's work, says Michael G. Pratt, PhD, a professor of management and organization at Boston College. To illustrate this, he points to the old tale of three bricklayers hard at work. When asked what they're doing, the first bricklayer responds, “I'm putting one brick on top of another.” The second replies, “I'm making six pence an hour.” And the third says, “I'm building a cathedral – a house of God.”

“All of them have created meaning out of what they've

done, but the last person could say what he's done is meaningful," Pratt says. "Meaningfulness is about the why, not just about what."

Something that's meaningful for one person may be inconsequential for another, however. What makes work worthwhile to you probably depends on your culture, your socioeconomic status and how you were taught to see the world, according to Pratt. An academic might find value in scholarship, for instance. "But a firefighter might look at an academic and ask, 'Are you helping people on a daily basis? If not, it's not worthwhile work at all.'"

People assign significance to their work in a variety of ways, as Pratt and doctoral students Douglas Lepisto and Camille Pradies describe in a chapter in the 2013 book "[Purpose and Meaning in the Workplace](#)." Some may derive meaning not from the job itself, but from the fact that it allows them to provide for their families and pursue non-work activities that they enjoy. Others may find meaning in being able to advance themselves and be the best they can be. People with a craftsmanship orientation take pride in performing the job well. Those with a service orientation find purpose in the ideology or belief system behind their work. Still others extract meaning from the sense of kinship they experience with co-workers.

Craftsmanship, service and kinship orientations are especially likely to be meaningful, as they all point to something beyond the individual, says Pratt.

Steger, too, has zeroed in on the idea that meaningful work is bigger than one's self. He and his colleagues recently created a tool for measuring meaningful work (*Journal of Career Assessment*, 2012). This "Work and Meaning Inventory" assesses three components, he says:

The feeling that the work has some purpose, evidence that the meaning derived from work feeds into the meaning one feels in life as a whole, and the idea that the work somehow benefits a greater good

As one might imagine, meaningful work and job satisfaction are linked, says Steger. In his 2012 paper, he found that having meaningful work predicts job satisfaction. But meaningful work was actually better than job satisfaction at predicting absenteeism – people who found their work more meaningful were less likely to miss work than people who merely reported being satisfied with their jobs. Meaningful work was also correlated with life satisfaction and less depression.

A higher calling

Researchers have found that workers who feel a higher calling to their jobs are among the most content. Take zookeepers, for example. Though more than eight in 10 zookeepers have college degrees, their average annual income is less than \$25,000. The typical job description involves scrubbing enclosures, scooping waste and spending time in the elements. There's little room for advancement and zookeepers tend not to be held in high regard, says Stuart Bunderson, PhD, a professor of organizational behavior at the Olin Business School at Washington University in St. Louis (*Administrative Science Quarterly*, 2009).

Nonetheless, zookeepers are a passionate bunch. Many volunteer for months or even years until a paid position opens up, Bunderson says. He and Jeffery Thompson, PhD, at Brigham Young University, began studying zookeepers while investigating ideological motivations for work.

Initially, they suspected the zoo's conservation mission probably motivated the keepers. While that was partly true, they found, it turned out their inspiration went deeper.

“There was this idea that they were born to do this work,” Bunderson says. “Working as a zookeeper felt like a personal destiny to many of them. They even shared stories about how events led them to the zoo, as if by fate.”

What Bunderson and Thompson zeroed in on among the zookeepers was a sense of calling. “You can say work is meaningful because you enjoy it or it serves some purpose,” Bunderson says, “but a calling makes that work personal.”

People who feel called to their careers are likely to find their work deeply meaningful, he says. Their personal connection with the job makes even the most trivial tasks feel significant. Often the experience of a calling comes with social benefits as well. People who felt called to be zookeepers tended to feel that their co-workers experienced the same motivation and sense of duty. “It’s not just that you do the same work, but you’re the same kind of people,” Bunderson explains. “It gives you a connection to a community.”

Having a sense of calling can affect not only what you do but where you do it. Pratt and colleagues found that among physicians, those who said medicine was their calling felt more attached to the hospital or health-care facility in which they worked ([Journal of Vocational Behavior](#), 2011). He suspects that’s because, for physicians, hospitals are instrumental in helping them reach their goals. “It’s hard to be a freelance physician,” he says.

Yet having a calling is “a double-edged sword,” Bunderson says. If you feel you were born to do something, it’s awfully hard to walk away from it. “You put up with sacrifices and difficulties. You’re more vulnerable to exploitation, since managers who know you’re deeply committed know they can treat you in ways that are less than respectful,” he says. “Deep meaning doesn’t come cheap.”

Calling may be more prevalent in some fields than in others. In not-yet published work, Bunderson studied business school graduates dating back 30 years. He found those in nonprofit and health-care settings were more likely to experience a sense of calling than management professionals in other sectors. In similar unpublished work, he found that public administrators and government employees are more likely to feel called to their work than are their counterparts in the private sector.

Does that mean certain jobs are inherently more meaningful than others? Not necessarily, Steger says, though work that benefits others does seem most likely to be considered meaningful. People also seem to find more value in their work when they’re using – and being appreciated for – their unique talents, he says. “Being able to use your strengths to really shine and make an impact seems to be a huge part” of meaningful work, he says.

Interestingly, one element that may not be terribly important to meaningfulness is salary. The 2013 Gallup report found that employees with college degrees are less likely than those with less education to report being engaged in their work – even though a college degree leads to higher lifetime earnings, on average.

That makes sense to Pratt. “My grandfather was a

glazier, and he found his work quite meaningful. When I asked my grandfather, ‘What did you do today?’ he could tell me exactly what he built,” he says. In his own university job, Pratt says he might spend a workday writing a few pages and sitting in meetings. At the end of the day, there’s nothing concrete to show for his efforts.

“If we’re not doing anything tangible, if we don’t know what the standards are for good work versus bad work, then it’s difficult for people to try to figure out why their work is meaningful,” he says.

Make your own meaning

Fortunately, you don’t have to become a glazier or a zookeeper to find meaning at work, says Jane E. Dutton, PhD, a professor of business administration and psychology at the Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan. Rather, you can redefine your job in personally meaningful ways, through a process she and her colleagues describe as “job crafting” ([*Purpose and Meaning in the Workplace*](#), 2013).

“Meaning doesn’t take money,” she says. “At any rank, people can make different meanings of their work, and also of themselves at work.”

Employees can shape their work experiences in three broad ways, Dutton says. The first is by altering the tasks they perform. Every job has elements that make it feel like, well, work. But most employees do have some leeway to tweak their duties. “You can be an architect of the tasks,” Dutton says.

Employees might choose to spend more energy on existing tasks they find particularly gratifying, for example. A professor might find she’s most fulfilled when

interacting with students. She may decide to limit the time she contributes to university committees so that she has more time to work with students. In some cases, adding fulfilling tasks can benefit you even if it increases your overall workload.

Second, Dutton says, employees can change relationships in the workplace. “We never make meaning in a vacuum. Work is very social,” she says. Spending time with toxic co-workers can drain meaning from the most gratifying jobs. But just a few moments spent collaborating with a valued colleague can be reinvigorating. “Even if you talk to someone for five minutes, if it’s someone you have a high-quality connection with, it’s like taking a vitamin,” she says.

Finally, a person can use cognitive restructuring to reframe the way he or she thinks about work. Steger mentions an accountant who worked at a community college. She found her work very meaningful not because she kept the accounts balanced, but because she felt her work allowed others to advance themselves through education. “For all these things in our jobs that we just don’t like, we can take a step back and link it to the things that really matter,” he says.

The zookeepers also illustrate the power of framing your job to see the big picture. They are able to find meaning in cleaning cages because they believe such tasks are vital to the bigger mission — not only caring for individual animals, but in fact helping to preserve entire species. “The more you look for the benefits of what you’re doing, the more it feeds you psychologically,” Dutton says.

Job crafting can pay off for employees and employers. As

Steger has shown, finding one's work meaningful is associated with life satisfaction and overall well-being. Organizations, too, benefit from workers who are invested in their jobs. The Gallup report found that engaged workers are most likely to build new products and services, attract new customers and drive innovation.

However, Dutton notes, there is a potential drawback to emphasizing how employees can create their own meaning at work. "People could argue that this contributes to how organizations can extract labor from people," she says. In other words: "I'll give you a crappy job and it's up to you to make something good out of it," she adds.

Despite that risk, however, Dutton and her colleagues see plenty of value in helping people find ways to make the most of what they have. After all, workers may not have the power to change their organizations, but they can change the way they frame their own duties.

Dutton is particularly interested in helping people in low-status jobs. Surprisingly, she's found that such workers may actually be in a better position to craft their jobs than are people at higher ranks ([*Journal of Organizational Behavior*](#), 2010).

She found people with less power and autonomy in their organizations actually saw more opportunities to influence and build trust with other people. For instance, one customer-service representative who Dutton interviewed asserted herself with her supervisor and asked to join a website committee — a role that added tasks to her formal job description but allowed her to do something she was passionate about. By contrast, high-

status employees were reluctant to impose on others, and were therefore less likely to involve other people in crafting their jobs.

Having witnessed too many workers constrained by Michigan's depressed economy, Dutton says she's seen firsthand how small changes can make a big difference for individuals, especially those at lower ranks.

"These are people who were happy to have a job, but the work stunk. I could see the power of helping them have hope," she says. "It shouldn't change the push for organizations to be fairer and better. But at the same time, I want more self-empowerment for workers to craft their work in ways that will make it less depleting and more enriching."

Source:

Weir, K. (2013, December) *More than job satisfaction*. American Psychological Association.
<https://www.apa.org/monitor/2013/12/job-satisfaction>

Career Development + Motivation

Did you know that motivation directs energy? If you are hungry, you are driven to satisfy your hunger, this motivation directs you to get up and cook a delicious meal (or order Chipotle to be delivered). Over the years, I have seen many students leave school because they don't have a career or major direction that they are interested in. Because of this, they don't have the motivation to continue on.

Maybe this sounds familiar to you? If we are motivated, we get stuff done because, again, motivation directs energy.

This third area of why it is important to develop a career direction is the one that keeps us moving forward, literally. Motivation helps us create and reach our goals.

Below is an excerpt from an article that discusses why motivation is important and also touches on the importance of self-management in this process.

Motivation and Career Development

Generally, motivation can be defined as a force or energy that exists within a person and influences effort, directs behaviors, and ultimately affects performance and other individual outcomes. Researchers believe the importance of personal motivation in career development has grown in recent years for a variety of reasons. For example, work roles have become more flexible, less well-defined, and subject to increasing change both within organizations and across the span of a career, which often involves multiple organizations. Career transitions appear to be more frequent and involve larger qualitative differences than in years past. These more significant qualitative differences reflect a transition from one career to another, for example, a person moving from an occupation as an engineer to one as a teacher.

Self-management of one's own career development is seen as increasingly important in this more uncertain environment. Individuals are being urged to take responsibility for their own careers not only by the popular press and career counselors but also by the organizations in which they presently reside. Researchers

have argued that people want to feel in control of the direction of their own careers, with a sense that they can significantly impact their own destinies. However, this desire varies across individuals, and some find the prospect of having control of their own destinies frightening in what seems to be an increasingly uncertain world. The direction and intensity of personal motivation to influence one's career development varies across individuals. Personal motivation and career self-direction affect not only career success but also other factors, such as mental health and life satisfaction. (Career Research, n.d.)

Source:

Career Research. (n.d.) *Motivation and Career Development*. <http://career.iresearchnet.com/career-development/motivation-and-career-development/>

The *How*

Ok, hopefully you now have a firm understanding of *why* career development is important. Now let's get into the 'how.' Here is a brief overview of the common Career Development Theories that I think are most helpful. These get to the *how*... How do we go about this work?

Donald Super's Self-Concept Theory

A long time leader in the field of career development theory is Donald Super:

“Donald Super created a developmental model which emphasized how personal experiences interact with occupational preferences in creating one’s self-concept. Many theorists before him simply looked at personality and occupation and focused on a trait matching approach.

One of Super’s greatest contributions to career development was his emphasis on the importance of developing a self-concept, as well as his recognition that this self-concept can change with new experiences over time. Before this, career development was mostly seen as a singular choice; however, Super viewed career development as a lifelong activity.” (NIH, 2016)

Stages of Career Development

Super’s Self-Concept theory posits that there are five main stages of career development. Each stage correlates with attitudes, behaviors, and relationships we all tend to have at that point and age. As we progress through each stage and reach the milestones identified, we prepare to move on to the next one.

#	STAGE	DESCRIPTION
1	GROWING	This is a time in early years (4–13 years old) when you begin to have a sense about the future. You begin to realize that your participation in the world is related to being able to do certain tasks and accomplish certain goals.
2	EXPLORING	This period begins when you are a teenager, and it extends into your mid-twenties. In this stage you find that you have specific interests and aptitudes. You are aware of your inclinations to perform and learn about some subjects more than others. You may try out jobs in your community or at your school. You may begin to explore a specific career. At this stage, you have some detailed “data points” about careers, which will guide you in certain directions.
3	ESTABLISHING	This period covers your mid-twenties through mid-forties. By now you are selecting or entering a field you consider suitable, and you are exploring job opportunities that will be stable. You are also looking for upward growth, so you may be thinking about an advanced degree.
4	MAINTAINING	This stage is typical for people in their mid-forties to mid-sixties. You may be in an upward pattern of learning new skills and staying engaged. But you might also be merely “coasting and cruising” or even feeling stagnant. You may be taking stock of what you’ve accomplished and where you still want to go.
5	REINVENTING	In your mid-sixties, you are likely transitioning into retirement. But retirement in our technologically advanced world can be just the beginning of a new career or pursuit—a time when you can reinvent yourself. There are many new interests to pursue, including teaching others what you’ve learned, volunteering, starting online businesses, consulting, etc.

Keep in mind that your career development path is personal to you, and you may not fit neatly into the categories described above. Perhaps your socioeconomic background changes how you fit into the schema. Perhaps your physical and mental abilities affect how you define the idea of a “career.” And for everyone, too, there are factors of chance that can’t be predicted or anticipated.

Super’s theory also highlights that each person can be qualified for many different occupations, there isn’t just that ONE perfect career for each person

You are unique, and your career path can only be developed by you.

Source:

Career/Life planning and personal exploration.
<https://www.oercommons.org/courses/career-life-planning-and-personal-exploration/view>

Even though Donald Super began formulating his theory of self-concept and career development all the way back in the 1950’s, his theory is still relevant to us today. His theory is based on life stages and this is the one area where I prefer to take a different approach. I find it helpful to apply his stages to one’s career, not to one’s life.

For instance, you may start your career as a 3rd grade teacher. You might really love your career for several years during which time you become *established* and *maintain* your work. However, you may start to feel a bit of *disengagement* after a while. This is not a bad thing (if you do something about it). So, let’s say you start to feel disengaged, what do you do? Work with 3rd graders for another 15 or 20 years or begin to start the *exploration* process over again? Perhaps you find yourself being intrigued with how the school is managed. You decide to do some information interviews with your principal and other elementary school principals in the area. You

start looking at the qualifications needed to become a principal and maybe enroll in some classes to fill any skill gaps you might have. You make a decision to start your new career!

Because changing careers is so common today, where it wasn't in the 1950's, it is appropriate view Super's stages in more of a cyclical rather than a linear way.

John Krumboltz's Planned Happenstance Theory

Krumboltz's Theory

John Krumboltz's planned happenstance theory makes it OK to not always plan, because unplanned events could lead to good careers.

An optimistic outlook can help turn serendipity into opportunity

John Krumboltz is an established career theorist. He most recently developed ideas about supporting indecision in clients. He states that indecision is desirable and sensible, as it allows the opportunity for clients to benefit from unplanned events. This theory is called planned happenstance.

This emerging theory specifically addresses the need for people to deal with change within the rapidly changing labour market. Managing life transitions is seen as an essential career management skill. Krumboltz's theory offers insight on how to deal with the limited degree of control we have over some career experiences.

At the core of this theory is the fact that unpredictable social factors, chance events and environmental factors

are important influences on clients' lives. As such, the counsellor's role is to help clients approach chance conditions and events positively. In particular, counsellors foster in their clients:

- curiosity to explore learning opportunities
- persistence to deal with obstacles
- flexibility to address a variety of circumstances and events
- optimism to maximise benefits from unplanned events.

Krumboltz states that people with these qualities are more likely to capitalise on chance events and turn serendipity into opportunity.

Furthermore, several factors have been highlighted as being helpful in career management, including:

- the commitment to ongoing learning and skill development
- ongoing self-assessment
- assessment and feedback from others
- effective networking
- achieving work-life balance
- financial planning to incorporate periods of unemployment.

These attributes and tasks enable you to turn chance encounters and occurrences into career opportunities.

Source:

Krumboltz's Theory. (2016, December 14)
<https://www.careers.govt.nz/resources/career-practice/career-theory-models/krumboltzs-theory/>

John Holland's Theory

John Holland takes a different approach to career development. His theory is based matching personality traits to careers. Here is an overview of his theory:

Holland's Theory

Careers are determined by an interaction between our personality and the environment in John Holland's Theory of Career Choice. We want jobs with people like us.

John Holland's Theory of Career Choice (RIASEC) maintains that in choosing a career, people prefer jobs where they can be around others who are like them. They search for environments that will let them use their skills and abilities, and express their attitudes and values, while taking on enjoyable problems and roles. Behavior is determined by an interaction between personality and environment.

Holland's theory is centered on the notion that most people fit into one of six personality types: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, Conventional, and Realistic.

Holland asserts that people of the same personality type working together in a job create an environment that fits and rewards their type.

Within this theory there are six basic types of work environment, which correlate directly to the personality

types. Holland emphasizes that people who choose to work in an environment similar to their personality type are more likely to be successful and satisfied. This idea is important as it shows Holland's theory can be flexible, incorporating combination types.

Holland's theory takes a problem-solving and cognitive approach to career planning. His model has been very influential in career counseling. It has been employed through popular assessment tools such as the Self-Directed Search, Vocational Preference Inventory and the Strong Interest Inventory.

Source:

Tertiary Education Commission. (n.d.) *Holland's theory*. [https://www.careers.govt.nz/resources/career-practice/career-theory-models/hollands-theory/#:~:text=John%20Holland's%20Theory%20of%20Career%20Choice%20\(RIASEC\)%20maintain%20that%20in,on%20enjoyable%20problems%20and%20roles.](https://www.careers.govt.nz/resources/career-practice/career-theory-models/hollands-theory/#:~:text=John%20Holland's%20Theory%20of%20Career%20Choice%20(RIASEC)%20maintain%20that%20in,on%20enjoyable%20problems%20and%20roles.)

You will have the opportunity to take the Strong Interest Inventory, which is based on Holland's theory, in just a few weeks. Many students find the Strong Interest Inventory helpful for confirming or verifying career directions that they've considered or learning about new career paths to explore.

Final Thoughts

There are many reasons to embark on this journey of career exploration and development and there are many ways to do this work, as you can see from your reading. The approach of this class is to start with self-reflection, learning more about YOU – your skills, talents, interests, personality, values. It will be from that foundation that we will begin to identify careers that may be a good fit for you. The key to finding a satisfying career is really understanding what you want in life and in a career. It is for that reason that we don't look at the 'hottest careers today' lists or the 'best careers for college grads' or even the 'highest paying jobs right now' lists. Pursuing a career based on its external attributes does not often align with one's own preferences. And finding a career that suits our preferences is what leads to greater job satisfaction and general well-being.

Chapter 2: Skills and Character Strengths

Skills and Character Strengths

Every single day we get things done: we accomplish tasks, we work on projects, we meet new people, we learn new things, the list goes on and on. What allows us to be productive are the *skills* and the *strengths* that we use.

Before reading any further: STOP! Take out a piece of paper and grab a pen or pencil. Now, write a list of all of your skills....

How many skills did you come up with? 25? 15? 10? 3?

Now, what if I asked you to write down three of your character traits? Would you be able to identify those things (love of nature, appreciation of art, kindness, generosity) that are special to you? Think of these character traits as part of who you are and which guide how you approach life.

SKILLS

Start Identifying and Recognizing Your Skills

Many of us do not recognize our skills, so this exercise I just had you do might have seemed difficult. One of your tasks for this lesson is to really recognize the skills you have and use and to identify the skill you really like to use.

Some skills seem natural (like reading, planning and making decisions), some skills we learn (like researching information or

balancing a checkbook), and many of our skills improve with time, practice and education. Basically, our skills change over time.

Self-Motivating Skills

Knowing what skills you *enjoy using* and are interested in developing further is another piece to understand in this process of career discovery. Self-motivating skills are those skills that we enjoy using – and it only makes sense to recognize these skills when we are choosing a career. Imagine how great it would be to use the skills you really enjoy on the job – your days would fly by!

Content vs. Transferable Skills

Content skills are those skills that are specific to a job or career. Being able to reconcile an account is an example of a content skill, a skill that is specific to the accounting and bookkeeping fields. Connecting wires to circuit breakers is a content skill, a specific skill that electricians know how to do.

Transferable skills are those skills that we can use in a variety of jobs and across career fields. Let's consider customer service skills. To provide effective customer service, one must have strong communication skills, effective listening skills, be able to recognize and understand non-verbal messages, and respond accordingly.

Customer service skills are considered transferable skills because they are used across all career fields. For instance, both the accountant and the electrician (and the teacher, social worker, nurse, administrative assistant, etc.) would use customer service skills.

The SCANS

As you will read below, the SCANS is a list of skills and competencies deemed important for today's workers. The original report was

directed towards educational institutions as a source of guidance for creating curriculum that would aid young people in being ready for work.

There is a three-part foundation [basic skills, thinking skills, and personal qualities] and there are five workplace competencies identified [resources, interpersonal, information, systems, and technology]. As you read through this report, can you identify which skills you have and which skills you might want to develop further?

The SCANS Skills and Competencies: An Overview

The Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) was appointed by the Secretary of Labor to determine the skills our young people need to succeed in the world of work. The Commission's fundamental purpose is to encourage a high-performance economy characterized by high-skill, high-wage employment.

The primary objective is to help teachers understand how curriculum and instruction must change to enable students to develop those high performance skills needed to succeed in the high performance workplace.

SCANS has focused on one important aspect of schooling: what they called "learning a living" system. In 1991, they issued their initial report, *What Work Requires of Schools*. As outlined in that report, a high-performance workplace requires workers who have a solid foundation in the basic literacy and computational skills, in the thinking skills necessary to put knowledge to work,

and in the personal qualities that make workers dedicated and trustworthy.

High-performance workplaces also require other competencies: the ability to manage resources, to work amicably and productively with others, to acquire and use information, to master complex systems, and to work with a variety of technologies.

This document outlines both these “fundamental skills” and “workplace competencies”

A Three-Part Foundation

Basic Skills:

Reads, writes, performs arithmetic and mathematical operations, listens and speaks

A. *Reading*—locates, understands, and interprets written information in prose and in documents such as manuals, graphs, and schedules

B. *Writing*—communicates thoughts, ideas, information, and messages in writing; and creates documents such as letters, directions, manuals, reports, graphs, and flow charts

C. *Arithmetic/Mathematics*—performs basic computations and approaches practical problems by choosing appropriately from a variety of mathematical techniques

D. *Listening*—receives, attends to, interprets, and responds to verbal messages and other cues

E. *Speaking*—organizes ideas and communicates orally

Thinking Skills:

Thinks creatively, makes decisions, solves problems, visualizes, knows how to learn, and reasons

A. *Creative Thinking*—generates new ideas

B. *Decision Making*—specifies goals and constraints, generates alternatives, considers risks, and evaluates and chooses best alternative

C. *Problem Solving*—recognizes problems and devises and implements plan of action

D. *Seeing Things in the Mind's Eye*—organizes, and processes symbols, pictures, graphs, objects, and other information

E. *Knowing How to Learn*—uses efficient learning techniques to acquire and apply new knowledge and skills

F. *Reasoning*—discovers a rule or principle underlying the relationship between two or objects and applies it when solving a problem

Personal Qualities:

Displays responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, self-management, and integrity and honesty

A. *Responsibility*—exerts a high level of effort and perseveres towards goal attainment

B. *Self-Esteem*—believes in own self-worth and maintains a positive view of self

C. *Sociability*—demonstrates understanding, friendliness, adaptability, empathy, and

D. *Self-Management*—assesses self accurately, sets personal goals, monitors progress, and exhibits self-control

E. *Integrity/Honesty*—chooses ethical courses of action

Five Workplace Competencies

Resources:

Identifies, organizes, plans, and allocates resources

A. *Time*—Selects goal-relevant activities, ranks them, allocates time, and prepares and follows schedules

B. *Money*—Uses or prepares budgets, makes forecasts, keeps records, and makes adjustments to meet objectives

C. *Material and Facilities*—Acquires, stores, allocates, and uses materials or space efficiently

D. *Human Resources*—Assesses skills and distributes work accordingly, evaluates performance and provides feedback

Interpersonal:

Works with others

A. *Participates as Member of a Team*—contributes to group effort

B. *Teaches Others New Skills*

C. *Serves Clients/Customers*—works to satisfy customers' expectations

D. *Exercises Leadership*—communicates ideas to justify position, persuades and convinces others, responsibly challenges existing procedures and policies

E. *Negotiates*—works toward agreements

involving exchange of resources, resolves divergent interests

F. *Works with Diversity*—works well with men and women from diverse backgrounds

Information:

Acquires and uses information

A. *Acquires and Evaluates Information*

B. *Organizes and Maintains Information*

C. *Interprets and Communicates Information*

D. *Uses Computers to Process Information*

Systems:

Understands complex inter-relationships

A. *Understands Systems*—knows how social, organizational, and technological systems work and operates effectively with them

B. *Monitors and Corrects*

Performance—distinguishes trends, predicts impacts on systems operations, diagnoses deviations in systems' performance and corrects malfunctions

C. *Improves or Designs Systems*—suggests modifications to existing systems and develops new or alternative systems to improve performance

Technology:

Works with a variety of technologies

A. *Selects Technology*—chooses procedures, tools

or equipment including computers and related technologies

B. Applies Technology to Task—Understands overall intent and proper procedures for setup and operation of equipment

C. Maintains and Troubleshoots Equipment—Prevents, identifies, or solves problems with equipment, including computers and other technologies

Glossary of Terms

Basic Skills

Reading:

Locates, understands, and interprets written information in prose and documents—including manuals, graphs, and schedules—to perform tasks; learns from text by determining the main idea or essential message; identifies relevant details, facts, and specifications; infers or locates the meaning of unknown or technical vocabulary; and judges the accuracy, appropriateness, style, and plausibility of reports, proposals, or theories of other writers.

Writing:

Communicates thoughts, ideas, information, and messages in writing; records information completely and accurately; composes and creates documents such as letters, directions, manuals, reports, proposals, graphs, flow charts; uses language, style, organization, and format appropriate to the subject matter, purpose, and audience. Includes supporting documentation and attends to level of detail; checks, edits, and revises for correct information,

appropriate emphasis, form, grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Arithmetic/Mathematics:

Arithmetic – Performs basic computations; uses basic numerical concepts such as whole numbers and percentages in practical situations; makes reasonable estimates of arithmetic results without a calculator; and uses tables, graphs, diagrams, and charts to obtain or convey quantitative information.

Mathematics – Approaches practical problems by choosing appropriately from a variety of mathematical techniques; uses quantitative data to construct logical explanations for real world situations; expresses mathematical ideas and concepts orally and in writing; and understands the role of chance in the occurrence and prediction of events.

Listening:

Receives, attends to, interprets, and responds to verbal messages and other cues such as body language in ways that are appropriate to the purpose; for example, to comprehend; to learn; to critically evaluate; to appreciate; or to support the speaker.

Speaking:

Organizes ideas and communicates oral messages appropriate to listeners and situations; participates in conversation, discussion, and group presentations; selects an appropriate medium for conveying a message; uses verbal languages and other cues such as body language appropriate in style, tone, and level of complexity to the audience and the occasion; speaks clearly and

communicates message; understands and responds to listener feedback; and asks questions when needed.

Thinking Skills

Creative Thinking:

Uses imagination freely, combines ideas or information in new ways, makes connections between seemingly unrelated ideas, and reshapes goals in ways that reveal new possibilities.

Decision Making:

Specifies goals and constraints, generates alternatives, considers risks, and evaluates and chooses best alternatives.

Problem Solving:

Recognizes that a problem exists (i.e., there is a discrepancy between what is and what should or could be), identifies possible reasons for the discrepancy, and devises and implements a plan of action to resolve it. Evaluates and monitors progress, and revises plan as indicated by findings.

Seeing Things in the Mind's Eye:

Organizes and processes symbols, pictures, graphs, objects or other information; for example, see a building from blue print, a system's operation from schematics, the flow of work activities from narrative descriptions, or the taste of food from reading a recipe.

Knowing How to Learn:

Recognizes and can use learning techniques to apply and adapt new knowledge and skills in both familiar and changing situations. Involves being aware of learning tools

such as personal learning styles (visual, aural, etc.), formal learning strategies (note taking or clustering items that share some characteristics), and informal learning strategies (awareness of unidentified false assumptions that may lead to faulty conclusions).

Reasoning:

Discovers a rule or principle underlying the relationship between two or more objects and applies it in solving a problem. For example, uses logic to draw conclusions from available information, extracts rules or principles from a set of objects or written text; applies rules and principles to a new situation, or determines which conclusions are correct when given a set of facts and a set of conclusions.

Personal Qualities

Responsibility:

Exerts a high level of effort and perseverance towards goal attainment. Works hard to become excellent at doing tasks by setting high standards, paying attention to details, working well, and displaying a high level concentration even when assigned an unpleasant task. Displays high standards of attendance, punctuality, enthusiasm, vitality, and optimism in approaching and completing tasks.

Self-Esteem:

Believes in own self-worth and maintains a positive view of self; demonstrates knowledge of own skills and abilities; is aware of impact on others; and knows own emotional capacity and needs and how to address them.

Sociability:

Demonstrates understanding, friendliness, adaptability, empathy, and politeness in new and on-going group settings. Asserts self in familiar and unfamiliar social situations; relates well to others; responds appropriately as the situation requires; and takes an interest in what others say and do.

Self-Management:

Assesses own knowledge, skills, and abilities accurately; sets well-defined and realistic personal goals; monitors progress toward goal attainment and motivates self through goal achievement; exhibits self-control and responds to feedback unemotionally and nondefensively; is a “self-starter.”

Integrity/Honesty:

Can be trusted. Recognizes when faced with making a decision or exhibiting behavior that may break with commonly-held personal or societal values; understands the impact of violating these beliefs and codes on an organizations, self, and others; and chooses an ethical course of action.

Source:

The SCANS skills and competencies: An overview. (2001, March 29) <https://www.sjsu.edu/faculty/chang/sped/scanskills.html>

Identify Your Skills

One way to identify your skills, is to think about what you’ve done in the past. What skills have you gained at work? Can you identify the content skills and the transferable skills? What about the skills

you've learned in school? Or in a volunteer position? What about the skills you use at home? At the grocery store? When cooking dinner?

At this beginning of this chapter, you were asked to write down the skills you have. Can you add to that list now?

Connecting Skills to Jobs

There are a few different programs that allow you to select the skills you currently enjoy using, or think you would enjoy using in the future, and from that selection create a list of careers that utilize those skills.

Career Information System. This is a program that is password protected. Check with your school to see if they have a subscription to this service.

[O*NET OnLine](#) sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor and free to use. From the main page, click on Advanced Search and then on Go to Skills Search. Choose the skills that sound interesting to you. Once you've chosen your skills, click Go at the bottom of the page. A big list of careers will appear that align with the skills you chose.

[Career One Stop Skills Matcher](#) also sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor.

Since new skills can always be developed, you might take these assessments more than once to see how the results might change. For instance, maybe you take an assessment using the skills you have today and look at your results. Then, try taking the same assessment using the skills that you think you would like to have one day in the future and see how your results differ. This exercise may give you some clues to a career direction and to the types of skills you would like to develop.

CHARACTER STRENGTHS – Our positive traits

Introduction



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:

<https://mhcc.pressbooks.pub/hd208/?p=21#oembed-1>

What Are Character Strengths?

By: Sherri Gordon

Good character is something everyone looks for in other people, whether they are employees, students, friends, or potential dating partners. Sometimes called character strengths, these are the good qualities that people possess—a collection of positive traits that show people's

“Character strengths aren't about ignoring the negative. Instead, they help us overcome life's inevitable adversities. For example, you can't be brave without first feeling fear; you can't show perseverance without first wanting to quit; you can't show

self-control without first being tempted to do something you know you shouldn't. (Brian, J., 2020)

strengths—rather than a compilation of their faults and issues.

According to those who practice positive psychology, good character is exemplified in 24 widely-valued

character strengths that are organized under six broad virtues. These 24 character strengths were first studied and identified by Dr. Martin Seligman and Dr. Neil Mayerson.

Together, they eventually created the Values In Action (VIA) Institute on Character, which identifies these character strengths that all people have in varying degrees. Later, a team of 50 social scientists identified six virtues, which are now used to classify the character strengths.

The goal behind the VIA Classification of Strengths is to focus on what is right about people rather than pathologize what is wrong with them. Consequently, those with an interest in positive psychology look for strengths of character in people and help them build on those attributes in their lives. The 24 character strengths that Dr. Seligman identified are divided into six classes of virtues. These six virtues include wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence. Here is a closer look at the six virtues and the character strengths that are classified under each.

Wisdom

Those who score high in the area of wisdom tend to

have cognitive strengths that lead them to not only acquire knowledge but to use it in creative and useful ways. Here is an overview of the core character strengths that fall under wisdom.

- **Creativity:** Thinking of new ways to do things
- **Curiosity:** Taking an interest in a wide variety of topics
- **Open-Mindedness:** Examining things from all sides; thinking things through
- **Love of Learning:** Mastering new topics, skills, and bodies of research
- **Perspective:** Being able to provide wise counsel to others; looking at the world in a way that makes sense

Courage

People who score high in courage have emotional strengths that allow them to accomplish goals despite any opposition they face—whether internal or external. Here is a closer look at the core character strengths that are classified under courage.

- **Honesty:** Speaking the truth; being authentic and genuine
- **Bravery:** Embracing challenges, difficulties, or pain; not shrinking from threat
- **Persistence:** Finishing things once they are started
- **Zest:** Approaching all things in life with energy and excitement

Humanity

Those who score high in humanity have a range of

interpersonal strengths that involve caring for and befriending others. Here's an overview of the core character strengths that are classified under humanity.

- **Kindness:** Doing favors and good deeds
- **Love:** Valuing close relations with others
- **Social Intelligence:** Being aware of other people's motives and feelings

Justice

People who have a number of character strengths under justice tend to possess civic strengths that underscore the importance of a healthy community. Here is a closer look at the core character strengths that fall under justice.

- **Fairness:** Treating all people the same
- **Leadership:** Organizing group activities and making sure they happen
- **Teamwork:** Working well with others as a group or a team

Temperance

Those who score have a number of character strengths that fall under temperance tend to have strengths that protect against the excesses in life. Here's an overview of the core character strengths that fall under temperance.

- **Forgiveness:** Forgiving others who have wronged them
- **Modesty:** Letting one's successes and accomplishments stand on their own
- **Prudence:** Avoiding doing things they might regret; making good choices
- **Self-Regulation:** Being disciplined; controlling

one's appetites and emotions

Transcendence

People who have a number of character strengths that fall under transcendence tend to forge connections with God, the universe, or religions that provide meaning, purpose, and understanding. Here's a closer look at the core character strengths that fall under transcendence.

- **Appreciation of Beauty:** Noticing and appreciating beauty and excellence in everything
- **Gratitude:** Being thankful for the good things; taking time to express thanks
- **Hope:** Expecting the best; working to make it happen; believing good things are possible
- **Humor:** Making other people smile or laugh; enjoying jokes
- **Religiousness:** Having a solid belief about a higher purpose and meaning of life

How Character Strengths Are Used

One of the main reasons for assessing character strengths is to use that information to understand, identify, and build on a person's strengths.

Knowing a person's character strengths provides a lens through which psychologists, educators, and even parents can see not only what makes a person unique, but also understand how to help that person build on those strengths to improve situations or outcomes.

For example, one widely researched strategy involves

encouraging people to use their signature strengths in a new way each week. In fact, one study found that having adults do this every day led to increases in happiness and decreases in depression for six months.

This study then became the basis for several more studies that utilized the same methods for older adults, employees, and people with traumatic brain injuries. Another approach involves focusing on a person's lowest-rated strengths in an attempt to enhance those areas of their lives.

Research also has demonstrated the living through a traumatic event can impact character strengths. In the six months following the 9/11 attacks, the character strengths of religiousness, hope, and love were elevated among U.S. respondents but not among European respondents.”

Source:

Gordon, S. (2020, June 30) *What are character strengths?* <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-are-character-strengths-4843090>

Character Strengths in the Workplace

“Why are character traits important in the workplace?”

When you know your best character traits, you can work to strengthen them. This can help you in a multitude of ways from advancing your career and achieving goals to developing relationships and growing your professional network.

Character traits can also help you make decisions that align with your values. For example, you might identify with being courageous, and as a result, you could be more

inclined to stand up for what you believe in or make a tough call at work.” (Indeed.com, 2021)

Why might we want to focus on our strengths?

Well, it might seem obvious, but here are two documented reasons why we might want to focus on our strengths and learn how to recognize and articulate the.

Research Points To Two Main Reasons to Focus on Strengths

By: Dr. Ryan Niemiec

You have the power to positively influence your well-being by focusing on your highest character strengths. Research shows that if you have an active awareness of your character strengths you are 9x more likely to be flourishing. But, how do they work to create such a positive effect?

Here are two ways:

1. Amplifying and growing the positive

“We can examine the importance of character strengths through a positive lens. Research has shown many positive benefits of using character strengths across physical, psychological, emotional, social, and spiritual domains. The benefits of character strengths have been demonstrated in many industries—especially business and education—but also in healthcare, coaching, and psychotherapy and counseling, to name a few. Specific benefits of character strengths have been linked with each of the main elements of well-being: positive emotions, engagement, meaning, positive relationships, and

accomplishment. They've been connected with many other benefits that help us amplify the positive in our life, such as self-acceptance, autonomy, goal progress, physical health, passion, and resilience. The newest research is showing that techniques for helping people boost their strengths can have important advantages over techniques that focus on correcting their deficits. But focusing on the positive is not the same as ignoring the negative.”

(from *The Power of Character Strengths: Appreciate and Ignite Your Positive Personality*, p. 18).

The research is clear: character strengths are your unique pathways to those positive goals people pursue in life. In other words, name something realistic and positive you want in your life. Fill in the blank here: _____. With whatever you say, one or more of your character strengths –perhaps used in a way different from what you're used to – can help you get there. They're not just the pathway but they're also the expression of fulfillment in life (see short summaries of hundreds of studies showing positive benefits of character strengths).

2. Learning from and reframing the negative

Research shows that humans demonstrate a number of biases in our thinking. One of those biases is the tendency to remember and be affected more by negative events than by positive events. Problems and upsetting emotions stick with us like glue. Strengths can help bring greater balance to this equation. We need negative experiences to learn from, motivate us, warn us, and help us grow. But those experiences should not define us. Reflecting on our strengths can help us offset those negative experiences, can help us figure out our natural best way to avoid them

in the future, and can remind us that we have unique resources available to us in negative situations... Research studies have also shown that the character strengths help us manage problems more effectively. For example, using character strengths has been linked with less stress and improved coping in the workplace, less friction in classrooms, less depression, and fewer physical symptoms, to name just a few settings in which character strengths have been studied (from *The Power of Character Strengths: Appreciate and Ignite Your Positive Personality*, pp. 18-19).

It's not only comforting but exciting to know that you are carrying these "tools" within you wherever you go. They are there for the sorrow, the ecstasy, and the laundry.

Source:

Niemiec, R. (2019) *Research points to two main reasons to focus on strengths*. <https://www.viacharacter.org/topics/articles/research-points-two-main-reasons-focus-strengths>

The Connection Between Character Strengths and Work

What's Missing in Your Career

By: Dr. Ryan Niemiec

How are strengths linked to careers? This is one of the most commonly asked questions I receive in my character strengths workshops. The short answer is: We need more research on the topic.

Here's the long answer: Traditional career counseling focuses on many different categories of strength, such as interests, skills, and talents. Tools that tap into your areas of interest and passion (e.g., the Strong Interest Inventory) have long been used by career counselors. They are also interested in how you build certain skills that might be related to particular careers—communication skills, programming skills, team-building skills.

And if you have a particular raw talent, a career counselor might suggest you pursue a related field. For example, if you're great at drawing, consider a career in graphic design. Or if you love dealing with numbers, consider pursuing accounting, mathematics, or engineering.

This is where the answer gets interesting. Whatever your interests, skills, and talents might be, they aren't the only types of strengths that are important when pursuing (or changing) a career.

THE MISSING PIECE

What is rarely discussed in career counseling is character strengths. Skills, interests, and talents are quite different from character strengths, or the positive traits that are essential to a person's identity. They are universal aspects of our personalities that are valued by people of all cultures.

Drawing connections between character strengths and career transitions, career decision-making, and career counseling is quite new (after all, the VIA Classification was first published in 2004). At present, more is unknown than known about the possible effects.

That said, early research is promising. Hadassah Littman-Ovadia, one of the leading researchers in positive psychology, published a study with her colleagues that compared strengths-based career counseling with traditional counseling. Unemployed job seekers were the subjects who received four sessions of character strengths counseling, or four sessions of traditional counseling. The researchers found that the career counseling that embedded character strengths was far more successful in helping people become employed (80%) compared with the traditional career counseling (60%).

BUILDING A SUCCESSFUL CAREER WITH YOUR STRENGTHS

Taking the VIA survey and understanding the 24 character strengths—and especially your signature strengths—can help you thrive in your current career, or discover a new path. Here's what to think about:

- **Self-awareness:** Be mindful of your signature strengths, middle strengths, and lesser strengths. Since deeper awareness often leads to insights which can lead

to change, it is possible that strengths knowledge (and practice therein) can lead people to becoming more informed on possible career paths they might choose. Note that this is very different from an authority or counselor telling someone or guiding them in a direction based on certain results.

- **Positivity:** There's pleasure, engagement, and meaning in knowing what your strengths are, which can empower you to use them with greater frequency, intensity, or duration; and/or with greater balance, fluency, and savvy in your career endeavours.

- **Productivity & Relationships:** You become more engaged, productive, and happy when you use your strengths at work, so taking the VIA survey is important for helping to catalyze strengths awareness, appreciation, and use. Align your strengths with your current work tasks (e.g., use creativity on a work project), and brainstorm new ways you might be able to use them too. You could even consider talking to your manager (or direct reports) about how to optimize your (or their) best qualities on the job.

WHEN STRENGTHS BECOME WEAKNESSES AT WORK

The VIA survey is not recommended to be used in career matching, including matching specific careers to a particular character strengths profile, determining you're not in the right career because of your profile, or determining you should not pursue a career path because of your profile.

There are many different kinds of jobs in any particular career. For example, an accountant might have a non-social, isolated bookkeeping job, or a creative and social job as a chief financial officer. It is not clear how to match

jobs and careers with VIA survey results (yet). Career selection is complex and nuanced, and is a highly individual and personal decision.

Source:

Niemiec, R. (2014) *What's missing in your career*.
<https://www.viacharacter.org/topics/articles/what%27s-missing-in-your-career>

THE CHARACTER STRENGTHS SURVEY

The Character Strengths Survey is free and available to everyone. If you are interested in learning more about your strengths, click on the link below.

[Character Strengths Survey](#)

After taking the survey, you will see your signature strengths displayed. Scroll down a little bit and download your free VIA Character Strengths Profile. The first 5 strengths listed are your Signature Strengths, strengths 6 – 19 are your Middle Strengths, and strengths 20 -24 are your Lesser Strengths.

“... the creators of the VIA assessment tool stress that the character traits not included among a person’s signature strengths are not necessarily weaknesses, but rather lesser strengths in comparison to the others. Likewise, the top five strengths should not be interpreted in a rigid way because there are usually no meaningful differences in their magnitudes.

It’s also important to note that the 24 character strengths that these tools identify have been studied

across cultures. Research shows that these strengths are linked to important components of individual and social well-being, even though different strengths predict different outcomes.

For instance, growing evidence indicates that the character strengths hope, kindness, social intelligence, self-regulation, and perspective all guard against the negative effects of stress and trauma. Meanwhile, successful recovery from physical illnesses is associated with increases in bravery, kindness, and humor. Additionally, identifying and utilizing character strengths also can help young people experience academic success, develop tolerance, delay gratification, and value diversity.” (Gordon, S., 2020)

Want to learn more about the individual character strengths?

The VIA Institute on Character website has a wealth of information about each of the character strengths. Once you click on the link below you can hover over a strength and get a snapshot description and you can click on ‘Learn more’ to get in depth information on that particular strength.

[The 24 Character Strengths](#)

Final Overview of the Virtues and Strengths



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:

<https://mhcc.pressbooks.pub/hd208/?p=21#oembed-2>

At the end of the video, Brian suggests to consider two questions:

1. How have you engaged these strengths in the past?
2. How can you use them more often this week?

What do you think your answers to these two questions would be?

Final Thoughts

While skills are learned, strengths are often considered a personal characteristic that each of us have. We all have the ability to strengthen both our skills and our character strengths. To start, however, we need to be able to:

- define them (i.e. What are skills? What are character strengths?),
- identify which ones we have (i.e. What skills do I have? What skills would I like to develop? What are my Character Strengths?), and
- articulate them to others (i.e. Currently, I have the following skills _____. I would like to develop these

skills: _____. My Character Strengths are
_____, which means _____).

Being able to answer these questions will give you clarity moving forward and will also be a huge help to you when you are on your next job interview!

Chapter 3: Self-Esteem, Values, and Purpose

Self Esteem, Values, and Purpose

This week we will cover three often over looked but very important topics: **self-esteem, values, and purpose**. Often, people do not think about the roles that these factors play in their lives and the impact that they can have on one's career.

SELF-ESTEEM

Let's think about self-esteem for a minute. What if you've always wanted to be a veterinarian, but you are worried that you can't do all that math and science? As career counselors, we hear concerns like this frequently. If a person is struggling with their self-esteem, it will affect what they believe they can accomplish. Unfortunately, low self-esteem has kept many people from pursuing their dream job.

Consider these two quotes taken from a study conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics:

“Believing in oneself is more than just a motivational slogan; it can strongly influence long-term career advancement and overall health.”

and

“...participants who scored high on self-evaluations enjoyed success earlier in their careers, engaged in continued higher education, and advanced more quickly than those who scored lower on self-evaluations.”

Not only does self-esteem determine what one thinks they are capable of, but it also can impact career advancement and health, too. It is worth spending some time evaluating your level of self-esteem and the impact it might have on your career development. Many people have suffered harm and trauma that has impacted their self-esteem. The good news is that self-esteem is not static; it changes over time and there are plenty of actions you can take to build up your self-esteem.

Check out this “Self-Esteem Self Guided Tour”. It is a helpful tool to assess where you are at with your self-esteem and where you could use support to heal and grow.

Self Esteem Self-Guided Tour – Rate Your Self

Esteem

Hello, friend. Welcome to the National Association for Self Esteem's "Self Guided Tour." The following questions are not so much a survey, assessment, or evaluation as they are an exploration into the development of your Self

Esteem. While we are all accustomed to seeing test questions as having right and wrong answers, that does not apply here. This is not a test. There are no wrong answers in our “Self Guided Tour.” Each question is designed to simply encourage thought and discussion. More important than your response to the questions

is the time you spend reading the “Self Esteem Enhancers,” seen to the right of (*or below*) each question. We at NASE know that your Self Esteem is a private issue and that is why our “Self Guided Tour” is completely anonymous. Have fun, enjoy, and remember to read the “Self Esteem Enhancers”

to the right of (*or below*)
each question. When
you're finished answering
the questions you can
request to receive a
printable Tip Sheet to
help you remember some
of the things you can do
to help reinforce healthy
Self Esteem.

ALERT

You may find as you're taking the "Self Guided Tour" that you are responding to the questions in terms of how you

would, ideally, like to be. Please resist that temptation and answer, instead, from a place of complete self-honesty.

I. When you make a mistake, do you tend to....

- Feel ashamed and embarrassed.
- Who me? I never make mistakes. But if I did make one, I would immediately correct it and hope no one was watching.
- Have no fear owning up to it in public, and I am open to receiving help from others in fixing it.

It is quite “normal,” and human, to not enjoy making mistakes! That is why we often feel embarrassed, deny their existence, and/or blame others for our errors. We believe that the best way is to admit your mistakes, learn from them and take corrective action. After all, a mistake is a mistake – no more, no less.

2. On average, when you look at yourself in the mirror what do you believe you see?

- Someone who is attractive and confident.
- Someone who is average and often unsure about what to do in life.
- Someone who is ugly and insecure.

We live in a society that emphasizes glamour and sex appeal. That is why most of us strive to achieve external beauty, but oftentimes we lose our uniqueness in the process. If we can accept the things we'd like to change without badmouthing or beating up on ourselves, we've come a long way toward self-acceptance.

3. When you are dealing with a problem in your life what do you tend to do?

- Blame everyone or anything that I think caused the situation. It's rarely my fault.
- I complain and vent to anyone willing to listen but rarely address my personal responsibility for the issue.
- Take responsibility for my thoughts, words, and actions because if I take ownership I am not a victim to the situation.

Taking responsibility for your own thoughts, words, and actions is more easily said than done. However, we believe the quality of your wellbeing is directly proportional to how much self-responsibility you are willing to take. When we blame others or outside events for our position or condition in life we lock ourselves into a prison of pain. There truly is freedom in taking ownership for how we respond to what happens to us in life.

4. If my wants and needs are different from those of others, I am likely to...

- Give up and give in. I'd accommodate.
- Say, "My way or the highway!" I argue until I get my way.
- Try to avoid them altogether. Why bother trying to get my needs on the table. Mine aren't important, and neither are theirs.

- Create a win/win.

Your wants, needs and self-worth are as important as those of anyone else. However, that doesn't mean others will automatically respect them. If you silence your own voice, others will not know what you want or need. It's up to you to claim your needs as important and learn how to respectfully assert yourself. With practice, you'll be amazed at how this will become second nature.

5. When you think about the greater purpose of your life what do you tend to think?

- I feel like I am drifting. I am ashamed to admit it but I don't know what I should be doing or even where to start.
- I have a general picture of what I want to do and what I am capable of creating for my life.
- I am on course with my purpose, and know I am capable of creating whatever my heart desires for my life.

Have you ever wondered "Why am I here?" or "What am I supposed to do in life?" If so, you're in very good company. This is one of the most fundamental life decisions you can make. Your purpose is about what you plan to achieve and the kind of person you want to be. Your character and your habits will lead you to be healthier, happier and more successful. What are you good at? What do you really enjoy? These are two good places to look when you're trying to

decide your direction. Your life has the potential to be so much more than you might imagine. The most important thing is that your life has meaning for you.

6. When I make a commitment to myself

I often tend to...

- Break it before the end of the hour, I am terrible at following up on my self-goals.
- I do it with hesitation and fear because I so desperately hate disappointment.
- tick to it with conviction and await the rewards that I believe will come from it.

If you've ever heard the phrase, your word is your bond, you'll understand why honoring commitments is an aspect of healthy Self Esteem. A commitment is a pledge; and a pledge is a guarantee. When you make a commitment to yourself or others you're putting your integrity on the line. As you learn to demonstrate that you can be counted on to do what you say, you build your Self Esteem and your credibility at the same time. That way you and others will know that "you walk your talk."

7. When you talk to yourself (you know, that little voice in your head) what does it tend to sound like?

- Very critical and negative. I often put myself down and beat myself up emotionally.
- Fairly confident and supportive, but I still have those days when my self-talk holds back my true greatness.

- Extremely confident and helpful. I have learned to become my own best friend and weed out my limiting thoughts from the empowering ones.

If you're like most people you say things to yourself you wouldn't tolerate coming from another person. Negative self-talk scares us out of taking positive risks so we can avoid failure. Here's how you can start to build positive, self-empowering inner dialogues. First, recognize your negative self-talk. Next, interrupt the pattern; tell yourself "Erase that. Here's what I really mean!" The last step is to give yourself a positive instruction, like "I can do this. I'm up to the task," or "Let's try it on for size." The more you're able to replace your negative self-talk with positive, the more your Self Esteem and self-confidence will grow.

8. How do you often react to what other people say about you?

- I take things personally, and if I think someone is saying something negative about me I take it too much to heart.
- I get defensive and often respond with an equal, if not greater, negative reaction to them.
- I value what others have to say about me — but honestly — I know who I am, and other peoples' opinions have no bearing on my self-worth.

When you put more weight on your own judgement than on others' it's easier to keep their words in perspective without becoming defensive. Your strong sense of self-worth allows you to maintain your power and still hear what others have to say without feeling bad about yourself.

Source:

Self Esteem Self-Guided Tour – Rate Your Self Esteem.
(n.d.) Retrieved April 7, 2021 from:
<https://healthyselfesteem.org/rate-your-self-esteem/>

The following are some tips that can be helpful as you are thinking about how to increase your self-esteem:

How to Build Self-Esteem: 5 Tactics to Change How You See Yourself

Everyone experiences bouts of self-doubt, but if low self-esteem is affecting your life, try these 5 tactics to build confidence and boost your self-esteem

Article by: Kathleen Smith, PhD, LPC

Your sense of self-worth will impact every arena of your life. Your job, your relationships, and even your physical and mental health are a reflection of your self-esteem. But what exactly helps shape your view of yourself and your abilities? The truth is that your level of self-esteem may

have grown or shrunk based on how people have treated you in the past and the evaluations you've made about your life and your choices.

The good news is that you have a fair amount of control when it comes to increasing your level of self-worth. There are simple, concrete changes you can make that challenge your mind and your body. One such change is to take steps to reduce negative thinking and build up positive, encouraging thoughts about the person you are and can be.

Replace Negative With Positive Thinking

1. **Identify triggers** – To increase the level of positive thinking in your day-to-day life, you first have to recognize what people, places, and things promote negative thinking. Maybe it's the balance in your bank account, or perhaps it's a coworker who's always complaining. You can't change certain situations, but you can change how you react to them and understand them. That starts with paying attention to what makes you feel sad or anxious.
2. **Take notes** – There's an ongoing dialogue, or "self-talk," always happening in your brain as you go about your day. This self-talk takes in the world around you and makes evaluations about yourself and others. So take the time to start noticing any interesting trends in this dialogue. Is this thinking based on facts? Or is it usually leaning towards the irrational, always assuming the worst in a situation?
3. **Challenge your thinking** – If you see yourself

jumping to conclusions, or always downplaying the positive about yourself, then you have to step up and add some positive thinking to your self-talk.

Learning to focus on the positive and to encourage yourself is a lot like a strengthening a muscle. You have to exercise your brain a little every day to develop a capacity for positive thinking, to forgive yourself when you make mistakes, and to learn to give yourself credit when you accomplish a goal.

Take an Inventory

If you're unsure where you rank when it comes to self-esteem, taking an inventory of your personal qualities can help. If you find yourself listing more weaknesses than strengths, this might be a sign that you tend to be too hard on yourself. Consider what talents, abilities, and passions you have not listed or maybe even discovered yet. Never assume you know everything about yourself and what you're capable of. People with high self-esteem leave room for self-discovery every day.

Acknowledge Successes

Often people with low self-esteem will dismiss their successes as luck or chance. Or they might focus on not being perfect rather than highlighting how far they have come. People with high self-esteem take the time to celebrate their accomplishments. They say, "Thank you," when people compliment them, rather than dismissing

their praise. This doesn't mean that people with high-self esteem are arrogant or narcissistic; they just have faith in their abilities and acknowledge successes when they do happen.

Stop Comparing Yourself

Other people can't be the standard when it comes to your self-esteem. This is because you'll always find someone who appears better than you or more capable than you in any arena of life. Social media certainly doesn't help, as researchers have found that people who check social media very frequently are more likely to suffer from low self-esteem. Remind yourself that people usually only share the best parts of their life online. Your own life should be the yardstick rather than others' lives because what is your best may not be someone else's, and vice versa. Remind yourself that any time you make an improvement or prevent yourself from repeating a mistake, you are making progress.

Practice Self-Care

The more you demonstrate that you value your health, the more you develop a capacity for loving other parts of yourself. Listen to your body and avoid foods that make you feel irritable or tired. Eating healthy and exercising also can increase positive thinking and help you feel more encouraged about your future. If you spend time with people who care about you, you may find that suddenly it's easier for you to care for yourself.

Remember that learning positive thinking and developing healthy lifestyle strategies aren't going to be overnight miracles. Being kind to yourself and increasing your sense of self-worth takes time, practice, and patience. But the more you challenge your thoughts and perspectives, the greater joy you can find in yourself and your abilities. You'll feel proud of how far you've come, and you'll look forward to the future.

Source:

Smith, K.S. (2021, January 22). How to Build Self-Esteem: 5 Tactics to Change How You See Yourself. Retrieved April 8, 2021, from <https://www.psycom.net/increasing-self-esteem>

VALUES

Think for a moment about what your values do for you... What role do they play in your life? Do they guide your decisions and behavior? Do they give you rules to live by? Do they help you understand right from wrong?

Whether we realize it or not, our values dictate a set of guidelines for how we live our lives. For some of us, thinking about our values is not something that we spend much time doing. However, values play a major role in whether or not we are happy, satisfied and fulfilled by the work that we do. Values can quite often be *the* determining factor in liking our job or disliking it. This chapter will give you the opportunity to reflect on the roles that your values play in your life and will allow you to discover and articulate what values are important for you to have in your career.

Where are you starting? Do you have some ideas about which careers interest you? Do you believe you can be anything you

choose? You will have a chance to think about these questions and more as you read and complete the activities in this chapter.

In the process of career exploration, knowing and being able to articulate what your work values are is one of the most important and primary steps you need to take.

How to Access Your Career Values

When considering a new job or career, your career [values](#) count as one of the most important factors that will guide your choices. These values will help when you decide on a potential company or position for employment.

Your career values represent the beliefs you have about what is important in your work, and what makes it meaningful to you.

What Do You Want From a Job?

People look for different things in their jobs. Some will look for prestige, while others seek a creative outlet, and still, others want flexible hours and independence. The list of desires can include earning a high income and meeting and interacting with people. Of course, the chance for advancement in the career field is also a primary driver of why people will choose any particular position.

As you can see from this list, values vary greatly from person to person. What matters to one may mean little to another person. So, it is essential to understand the unique makeup of your value system.

Once you figure out what you value, you'll have the answer to what motivates you to do your best job, and you can use this knowledge to guide your [employment choices](#).

Career Satisfaction

Some career theorists believe that how well a job or career satisfies our values should be the most important consideration when evaluating options.

These theorists posit that work which lines up with our values will be more meaningful, and we will be more likely to invest our energies to master the roles and [achieve success](#). Most career experts recommend considering personality traits, interests and abilities in conjunction with values when making career choices.

Identifying Your Values

One way to identify your career values is to look at a list of examples and rate how much each of the items matters to you. Rate the list on a scale of one to ten. Then examine some of the highest-rated values and choose six to ten that should have the greatest weight when considering career and alternatives.

You can also separate these descriptive terms into categories, such as who, what, where, and workload. Instead of a numerical ranking system, you may choose to rank the terms using Must have, Nice to have, Ok not to have, and Must not have.

List of Possible Career Values

Some of the values you want and require in your work or career probably involve qualities and opportunities that enhance your life emotionally and intellectually. Achieving these values as part of your job or career might make you feel challenged, inspired, and [fulfilled](#).

Some career or job values have to do more with the environment in which you spend a large proportion of your waking hours, and the conditions under which you perform your work.

While these values may not offer as much emotional fulfillment, they can make your work life easier to navigate, such as having a mentor, or easing financial stress, because you have job security.

The following list captures examples of some of these types of values:

- Adventure
- Autonomy
- Avoiding stress
- Building things
- Camaraderie
- Casual work environment
- Challenge
- Changing the world
- Collaborating with others
- Competition
- Creating new things
- Creativity

- Diversity
- Employee benefits
- Exposure to beauty
- Fast pace
- Fun
- Helping others
- High income
- High level of interaction with people
- Income-based on productivity
- Influencing others
- Intellectually demanding work
- Job security
- Location
- Moral/spiritual fulfillment
- Opportunity for advancement
- Opportunity to lead
- Opportunity to learn new things
- Outlet for creativity
- Physical activity
- Pleasant work environment
- Power
- Prestige
- Recognition
- Risk-taking
- Routine work
- Seeing tangible results from work completed
- Sharing ideas or information
- Socialization
- Solving problems
- Status as an expert
- Structure
- Supportive management

- Team membership
- Time freedom
- Travel
- Variety of tasks
- Work/life balance
- Working alone
- Working outside

You can also use this list to generate ideas for different types of jobs or positions to explore if you're in the midst of a job search, and flesh out your resume by adding a few in your resume's employment objective section and in your cover letter.

Source:

Doyle, A. (2019, October 23). How to Assess Your Career Values. Retrieved April 7, 2021, from <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/what-are-career-values-with-examples-2059752>

VALUES REFLECTION

Now it is time to do some self assessment to gain a better understanding of your values. Complete the [Personal Values Assessment](#). Once you have completed the assessment, your results will be emailed to you. Then go ahead and **reflect** on the following prompts:

- What were the top 10 values you chose in the assessment?
- Among those 10, what are your top 3 Values, based on what you learned about yourself from the Personal Values Assessment and the list of values they asked you to examine?
- Think about these values related to your future career.
- How can you imagine these values being represented by a possible career? Do these values create any conflicts for you in terms of thinking about a career?
- What occupations might allow you to express your work values?
- Directly reference the course materials and try to consider ideas, events and experiences in a variety of ways. This is a good place to examine and challenge your belief systems.

Source:

Personal Values Assessment (PVA). (2020, May 06). Retrieved April 7, 2021, from <https://www.valuescentre.com/tools-assessments/pva/>

Passion or Purpose?

You may have had people ask you, “What are you passionate about?” Or try to give you sage advice by telling you, “Just follow your passion.”

But passion is tricky. How do we know what we are passionate

about? Maybe we have fleeting passions – one week it’s psychology, the next week it’s all about animals. Maybe we’ve never felt the spark of being passionate about something or we don’t know what that is supposed to feel like.

Luckily, researchers at Stanford University have found that following one’s passion is not always the best advice and in fact, it can narrow one’s focus to the point that other options are neglected or not noticed.

Stanford researchers: Follow your passion advice could make you less successful

By Abigail Johnson Hess, June 2018

“If your college graduation speaker told you to “follow your passion,” you may want to ignore them.

According to an upcoming paper in *Psychological Science* written by three Stanford researchers, that advice may actually make people less successful, since it unrealistically implies an easy path to success and narrows your focus too much.

Stanford psychologists Carol Dweck and Gregory Walton, with the help of former Stanford postdoctoral fellow Paul O’Keefe, conducted a series of laboratory studies that examined the belief systems that lead people to succeed or fail.

The researchers recruited participants from two categories: those who were passionate about science, technology, engineering and math (STEM), and those who were passionate about humanities and the arts.

Over five experiments, the researchers observed a total

of 470 participants as they read articles and watched videos on subjects that interested them and on subjects that did not interest them. Participants who were deeply interested in only one topic were less likely to finish and understand the materials.

The researchers concluded that popular mantras like “follow your passion” make people think that pursuing a passion will be easy. Believers are then more likely to give up when they face challenges or roadblocks.

They also found that focusing on following a single passion made people less likely to consider new potential areas of interest. This close-minded view can be detrimental to the success of the individual and to the success of communities, says Walton.

“Many advances in sciences and business happen when people bring different fields together, when people see novel connections between fields that maybe hadn’t been seen before,” he says.

O’Keefe adds that the world is becoming increasingly interconnected, making people who are able to make connections between fields such as art, technology and the social sciences more valuable than ever.

“If you are overly narrow and committed to one area, that could prevent you from developing interests and expertise that you need to do that bridging work,” says Walton.

Instead of thinking of your career as an opportunity to follow your passion, the researchers suggest thinking of life as a series of opportunities to develop several passions.

“If you look at something and think, ‘that seems

interesting, that could be an area I could make a contribution in,' you then invest yourself in it," says Walton. "You take some time to do it, you encounter challenges, over time you build that commitment."

Mark Cuban, owner of the Dallas Mavericks and star on ABC's hit reality television show, "Shark Tank," takes this line of thinking one step further.

"One of the great lies of life is 'follow your passions,'" said Cuban as part of the Amazon Insights for Entrepreneurs series. "Everybody tells you, 'Follow your passion, follow your passion.'"

He argues that people should focus on their strengths rather than their passions, because we are not always good at the things that interest us the most and because perfecting a strength can become a passion.

"I used to be passionate to be a baseball player. Then I realized I had a 70-mile-per-hour fastball," jokes Cuban. Competitive major league pitchers throw fastballs in the range of 90-plus miles per hour.

"When you look at where you put in your time, where you put in your effort, that tends to be the things that you are good at. And if you put in enough time, you tend to get really good at it," he says. "If you put in enough time, and you get really good, I will give you a little secret: Nobody quits anything they are good at because it is fun to be good. It is fun to be one of the best."

Source:

Hess, A.J. (2018) Following your passion makes you less successful. Retrieved April 9, 2021, from <https://www.cnn.com/2018/06/22/stanford->

researchers-following-your-passion-makes-you-less-successful.html

Many years ago, I was guilty of having students search or strive to uncover their passion. I don't do this anymore. Instead, I encourage students to think about purpose. What purpose do you want to serve? Below is an article that addresses this idea.

Beyond A Career, Have An Awesome Life Purpose

By Raquel Vaz, September 2018

“Since I was young, I've noticed that there are people who stand out from the crowd. The earliest role models I admired were grade school teachers that had something more in their eyes. They showed passion in their work educating students, and I wanted to follow their examples.

These were people with something more, something that was beyond my comprehension, but effectively mesmerized everyone around them. There was something magical about it. These teachers had the power to make learning special, and, at the same time, natural.

Later in life, I found that same glint in the eyes from leaders of social movements, environmentalists, and successful professionals.

From observing these great leaders, I discovered the meaning of purpose: passion, a reason behind goals and

actions that motivate you to get up every day to do something more than just making money.

True success goes beyond stereotypes.

Purpose helps you—defining and measuring what true professional success means to you. Though ideals of success exist and society has created those stereotypes, your professional achievement is personal and distinctive.

A fast-paced and stressful executive life can be defined as successful by more competitive types, while it is far from the ideal of a person seeking a more peaceful life, such as an owner of a yoga studio—and vice versa.

Is having a personal purpose the key to professional achievement?

More important than pursuing a great career is chasing what fulfills you. Everything indicates that knowing and accepting yourself as well as discovering and following your passion is the right path for anyone who wants success.

Who doesn't want to be a successful professional? Find what moves you and move towards that direction.

You are right to believe that taking that direction is not simple. I also realized that it would be too innocent to believe so. However, not all successful professionals carry the same brightness in their eyes. On the contrary, a successful career often comes with a great burden.

So, how is having a purpose different in bringing true professional success?

Certainly, when a person is aware of their personal purpose, their choices are more assertive and their goals clearer. Making a choice is saying no to a host of other

possibilities. When you're clear about your purpose, you can make decisions with the certainty that you're choosing the best path for yourself.

The challenges and the battles in following your purpose does not make the path simple; it remains arduous, so don't get discouraged along the way.

Thankfully, there is a big difference in your journey of purpose. It is the way you face universal life challenges and the unknown strengths within you to face each one of them:

Knowing to choose what battles to fight

The major difference is that the purpose allows you to know what battles you want to fight and which ones are not worth pursuing.

Not everything we do on a day-to-day basis is enjoyable, and sometimes we can lose focus and even fight over things that will not make a big difference for us or where we work. When we know our "why" we can focus our energy easier.

Holding a firm and proper posture

When you know your aspiration and goals, the way to act is coherent to what you believe in, therefore, more natural.

So, especially for women, the purpose helps to have a firmer and more accurate stance in a variety of

situations—including when facing somewhat hostile corporate environments.

Do not allow yourself to be limited

Unfortunately in the corporate world—especially as a woman—it is common to allow self-limiting where your self-esteem decreases and you silence your voice. But, at times like this, purpose reminds you of who you are and who you believe you should be. It becomes clear that what others impose on you is not in line with your true limitations. You know you are more valuable—and you make yourself heard.

Fear diminishes and courage is gained

Empowerment in your profession and in your life is the incredible difference of having clarity in your personal purpose. The courage to be who you are allows you to take more risks, take more action, and speak up. Job changes or entrepreneurial adventures become less complex. It makes you understand that when you fall, you just get up and move on. Your purpose gives you the strength to lift your head when wolves try to devour you. It clarifies what you want, but especially what you do not want for yourself.

The magic is in you. In your ability to believe in what you were born to do.

The strength of a purpose does not make the path

simpler, but it empowers and equips you to face each obstacle.

You gain strength from being yourself without fear. You begin to have more courage to follow what you want, not what society tries to tell you is necessary to be a successful professional.

You can and should define what success means to you. So, I challenge you to answer these questions for yourself:

- Is the success model I see out there what really makes me happy?
- What could make my eyes shine every day?
- Success! What is it to me?
- What should be the measure of my success?

Being successful can be as simple as doing small day-to-day tasks that make you feel good about yourself.”

Source:

Vaz, R. (2018) Beyond a career, have an awesome life purpose. Retrieved April 9, 2021, from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/womensmedia/2018/09/27/beyond-a-career-have-an-awesome-life-purpose/?sh=431990e269ec>

VALUES AND SELF-ESTEEM AND PURPOSE, OH MY!

At this point, you might be wondering how self-esteem, values, and purpose work together. Sandra Loffredo (2017) suggests that our values give us a “sense of purpose” and acts as guides towards careers that might fit us best.

So, at the risk of over-simplifying this process, we might say that

our values lead to our purpose and our self-esteem is what allows us to acknowledge and act on our purpose. Of course, a lower self-esteem can hold us back and keep us from action, which is why it is important to check our self-esteem and consider whether or not it needs some enhancement.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Out of the 10 **values** that you chose on the Personal Values Assessment, what are your top 3?
- What occupations might allow you to express your **work values**? How can you imagine these values being represented by a possible career?
- Consider the readings on **self-esteem**. How would you rate your current level of self-esteem? Do you think this is something you need or would like to work on? If so, how might you do that? (hint: refer back to the two articles for specific ideas)
- Consider the reading on **purpose**. Spend some time to think about and answer author Raquel Vaz's question (article above: Beyond A Career, Have An Awesome Life Purpose): *What could make my eyes shine every day?* Your answer to this question will change over time, but think about how you would answer this question today.
- Optional. Was there anything else from this week's lesson that stood out to you or you felt was impactful? If so, what was it? How do you think it could impact your career exploration process?

Chapter 4: Interests and Personality

Interests

Have you ever noticed that you enjoy spending time working on, or engaging in, activities that you are *interested* in? Have you ever thought of applying this principle to your career choice? The first part of this lesson will focus on exploring the concept of applying our interests to our career choice.

Holland's Theory of Vocational Choice

Article source: Holland's Theory of Vocational Choice (n.d.)

The theory of vocational choice developed by John L. Holland is one of the most widely researched and applied theories of career development. Based on the premise that personality factors underlie career choices, his theory postulates that people project self- and world-of-work views onto occupational titles and make career decisions that satisfy their preferred personal orientations. The theory incorporates several constructs from personality psychology, vocational behavior, and social psychology, including self-perception theory and social stereotyping.

Applications of Holland's theory of vocational choice involve assessing individuals in terms of two or three prominent personality types and then matching the

respective types with the environmental aspects of potential careers. The theory predicts that the higher the degree of congruence between individual and occupational characteristics, the better the potential for positive career-related outcomes, including satisfaction, persistence, and achievement.

Source:

Holland's Theory of Vocational Choice. (n.d.) Career Research. <http://career.iresearchnet.com/career-development/hollands-theory-of-vocational-choice/>

RIASEC Model

Below you will read about the 6 different interest/personality areas referenced in Holland's theory. Often, these areas are displayed in a hexagon like the one seen in this interactive link: <https://self-directed-search.com/riasec-theory/>

Read on to learn about how interests (often referred to as personality) and work relate.

Holland's Theory

Careers are determined by an interaction between our personality and the environment in John Holland's Theory of Career Choice. We want jobs with people like us.

John Holland's Theory of Career Choice (RIASEC) maintains that in choosing a career, people prefer jobs where they can be around others who are like them. They

search for environments that will let them use their skills and abilities, and express their attitudes and values, while taking on enjoyable problems and roles. Behaviour is determined by an interaction between personality and environment.

Holland's theory is centred on the notion that most people fit into one of six personality types:

Realistic

Investigative

Artistic

Social

Enterprising

Conventional.

Realistic

Descripti on of interest area	Some key skills	Some occupations with Realistic components	Subjects you could study to give you the skills
Likes to work mainly with hands, making, fixing, assembling or building things, using and operating equipment, tools or machines. Often likes to work outdoors	Using and operating tools, equipment and machinery, designing, building, repairing, maintaining, working manually, measuring, working in detail, driving, moving, caring for animals, working with plants	Pilot, farmer, horticulturalist, builder, engineer, armed services personnel, mechanic, upholsterer, electrician, computer technologist, park ranger, sportsperson	English, Maths, Science, Workshop, Technology, Computing, Business Studies, Agriculture, Horticulture, Physical Education

Investigative

Descripti on of interest area	Some key skills	Some occupations with Investigative components	Subjects you could study to give you the skills
Likes to discover and research ideas, observe, investigate and experiment, ask questions and solve problems	Thinking analytically and logically, computing, communicating by writing and speaking, designing, formulating, calculating, diagnosing, experimenting, investigating	Science, research, medical and health occupations, chemist, marine scientist, forestry technician, medical or agricultural laboratory technician, zoologist, dentist, doctor	English, Maths, Science, Computing, Technology

Artistic

Description of interest area	Some key skills	Some occupations with Artistic components	Subjects you could study to give you the skills
Likes to use words, art, music or drama to communicate, perform, or express themselves, create and design things	Expressing artistically or physically, speaking, writing, singing, performing, designing, presenting, planning, composing, playing, dancing	Artist, illustrator, photographer, signwriter, composer, singer, instrument player, dancer, actor, reporter, writer, editor, advertiser, hairdresser, fashion designer	English, Social Studies, Music, Drama, Art, Graphic Design, Computing, Business Studies, Languages

Social

Description of interest area	Some key skills	Some occupations with Social components	Subjects you could study to give you the skills
Likes to work with people to teach, train and inform, help, treat, heal and cure, serve and greet, concerned for the wellbeing and welfare of others	Communicating orally or in writing, caring and supporting, training, meeting, greeting, assisting, teaching, informing, interviewing, coaching	Teacher, nurse, nurse aide, counsellor, police officer, social worker, salesperson, customer service officer, waiter, secretary	English, Social Studies, Maths, Science, Health, Physical Education, Art, Computing, Business Studies, Languages

Enterprising

Descripti on of interest area	Some key skills	Some occupations with Enterprising components	Subjects you could study to give you the skills
Likes meeting people, leading, talking to and influencing others, encouraging others, working in business	Selling, promoting and persuading, developing ideas, public speaking, managing, organising, leading and captaining, computing, planning	Salesperson, lawyer, politician, accountant, business owner, executive or manager, travel agent, music or sports promoter	English, Maths, Business Studies, Accounting, Economics, Social Studies, Drama, Computing, Text Information Management, Languages

Conventional

Description of interest area	Some key skills	Some occupations with Conventional components	Subjects you could study to give you the skills
Likes working indoors and at tasks that involve organising and being accurate, following procedures, working with data or numbers, planning work and events	Computing and keyboarding, recording and keeping records, paying attention to detail, meeting and greeting, doing calculations, handling money, organising, arranging, working independently	Secretary, receptionist, office worker, librarian, bank clerk, computer operator, stores and dispatch clerk	English, Maths, Business Studies, Accounting, Economics, Computing, Text Information Management

Holland asserts that people of the same personality type working together in a job create an environment that fits and rewards their type.

Within this theory there are six basic types of work environment, which correlate directly to the personality types. Holland emphasises that people who choose to work in an environment similar to their personality type are more likely to be successful and satisfied. This idea is important as it shows Holland's theory can be flexible, incorporating combination types.

Holland's theory takes a problem-solving and cognitive approach to career planning. His model has been very

influential in career counselling. It has been employed through popular assessment tools such as the Self-Directed Search, Vocational Preference Inventory and the Strong Interest Inventory.

There is much research to support Holland's typology. However it is not without criticism, the most common being the prevalence of females to score in three personality types (artistic, social and conventional). According to Holland this is because society channels women into female-dominated occupations.

Source:

Holland's Theory. (2019, August 13)
[https://www.careers.govt.nz/resources/career-practice/career-theory-models/hollands-theory/#:~:text=John%20Holland's%20Theory%20of%20Career%20Choice%20\(RIASEC\)%20maintains%20that%20in,on%20enjoyable%20problems%20and%20roles.](https://www.careers.govt.nz/resources/career-practice/career-theory-models/hollands-theory/#:~:text=John%20Holland's%20Theory%20of%20Career%20Choice%20(RIASEC)%20maintains%20that%20in,on%20enjoyable%20problems%20and%20roles.)

Personality

Did you know that another very important aspect of yourself to consider when looking for your perfect career is to consider your personality?

All of us have different personality traits and those traits can be explored, identified, and understood in this process of self-assessment as it relates to career planning. For instance, do you prefer and enjoy doing work that involves paying close attention to detail or looking at the big picture? Do you prefer to lead a planful, organized life or are you more spontaneous and prefer to 'go with

the flow?' Do you like to talk things through or do you like to think before you talk?

All of these questions are tied to our personality, or our *preferred* way of doing things.

For this lesson, you will be taking the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) to learn more about your preferences. Below are a few articles that help to further explore the concept of personality preferences and career development.

Personality and Careers

Article from <https://www.myersbriggs.org/>

Knowing your personality type, as measured through the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator[®] instrument, can help you with career planning at every stage: from your choices of subjects and majors in school to choosing your first career, to advancing in your organization or changing careers later in life.

People often find difficulty defining what kind of work they want to do or why a given field makes them comfortable or uncomfortable. Personality type is a practical tool for investigating what works for you, then looking for and recognizing work that satisfies your preferences. Knowing your MBTI[®] type may, for example, prove helpful in deciding what specific areas of law, medicine, education, or business a person prefers. A person with a preference for Introversion may find he or she is happier doing research, while a person who prefers Extraversion may favor a field with more interaction with people.

Work environments influence how comfortable you are

at your job. Someone with a preference for Introversion, for example, who is required to do a lot of detail work or think through a problem, may find it disruptive to be in an environment that is too loud or where a lot of interaction is required. When you know this about yourself, you can make arrangements to do your work in a more suitable location or at a time when there is less activity and interference.

Even when circumstances make it necessary for you to do work that you have not chosen or which you must do as part of your overall job description, knowledge and understanding of type can help you discover and use your strengths to accomplish the work. When you find an unsatisfactory job fit, you can examine the reasons and seek solutions based on your preferences.

When you do have an opportunity to take a new path in your work, type can help you analyze the fit of your type with your past work and consider what new direction can best fit with your preferences.

Source:

Personality and Careers. (n.d.) Retrieved April 17, 2021 from <https://www.myersbriggs.org/type-use-for-everyday-life/personality-and-careers/>

The MBTI assesses one's personality preferences and categorizes those preferences into one of 16 different types. "MBTI type descriptions characterize 16 types at their best; provide positive, self-affirming goals; and note blind spots and problems to avoid." (MBTI; Myers & McCaulley, 1985)

Each type is identified by a 4 letter code. Each letter comes from a scale that measures the following preferences:

- Where do you focus your attention and get energy? (*Extraversion or Introversion*)
- How do you prefer to take in information? (*Sensing or Intuition*)
- How do you make decisions? (*Thinking or Feeling*)
- How do you deal with the outer world? (*Judging or Perceiving*)

The following article gives more information on these scales and on the MBTI instrument including the history of its development. There are also links for each of the 16 difference personality types that you might want to refer back to after receiving your MBTI results.

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator Guide

By Kendra Cherry

Have you ever heard someone describe themselves as an INTJ or an ESTP and wondered what those cryptic-sounding letters could mean? What these people are referring to is their personality type based on the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI).

The Myers-Briggs Personality Type Indicator is a self-report inventory designed to identify a person's personality type, strengths, and preferences. The questionnaire was developed by Isabel Myers and her mother Katherine Briggs based on their work with Carl Jung's theory of personality types. Today, the MBTI inventory is one of the most widely used psychological instruments in the world.

The Development of the Myers-Briggs Test

Both Myers and Briggs were fascinated by Jung's theory of psychological types and recognized that the theory could have real-world applications. During World War II, they began researching and developing an indicator that could be utilized to help understand individual differences.

By helping people understand themselves, Myers and Briggs believed that they could help people select occupations that were best suited to their personality types and lead healthier, happier lives.

Myers created the first pen-and-pencil version of the inventory during the 1940s, and the two women began testing the assessment on friends and family. They continued to fully develop the instrument over the next two decades.

An Overview of the Test

Based on the answers to the questions on the inventory, people are identified as having one of 16 personality types. The goal of the MBTI is to allow respondents to further explore and understand their own personalities including their likes, dislikes, strengths, weaknesses, possible career preferences, and compatibility with other people.

No one personality type is “best” or “better” than another. It isn't a tool designed to look for dysfunction or

abnormality. Instead, its goal is simply to help you learn more about yourself. The questionnaire itself is made up of four different scales.

Extraversion (E) – Introversion (I)

The extraversion-introversion dichotomy was first explored by Jung in his theory of personality types as a way to describe how people respond and interact with the world around them. While these terms are familiar to most people, the way in which they are used in the MBTI differs somewhat from their popular usage.

Extraverts (also often spelled extroverts) are “outward-turning” and tend to be action-oriented, enjoy more frequent social interaction, and feel energized after spending time with other people. Introverts are “inward-turning” and tend to be thought-oriented, enjoy deep and meaningful social interactions, and feel recharged after spending time alone.

We all exhibit extraversion and introversion to some degree, but most of us tend to have an overall preference for one or the other.

Sensing (S) – Intuition (N)

This scale involves looking at how people gather information from the world around them. Just like with extraversion and introversion, all people spend some time sensing and intuiting depending on the situation.

According to the MBTI, people tend to be dominant in one area or the other.

People who prefer sensing tend to pay a great deal of attention to reality, particularly to what they can learn from their own senses. They tend to focus on facts and details and enjoy getting hands-on experience. Those who prefer intuition pay more attention to things like patterns and impressions. They enjoy thinking about possibilities, imagining the future, and abstract theories.

Thinking (T) – Feeling (F)

This scale focuses on how people make decisions based on the information that they gathered from their sensing or intuition functions. People who prefer thinking place a greater emphasis on facts and objective data.

They tend to be consistent, logical, and impersonal when weighing a decision. Those who prefer feeling are more likely to consider people and emotions when arriving at a conclusion.

Judging (J) – Perceiving (P)

The final scale involves how people tend to deal with the outside world. Those who lean toward judging prefer structure and firm decisions. People who lean toward perceiving are more open, flexible, and adaptable. These two tendencies interact with the other scales.

Remember, all people at least spend some time extraverting. The judging-perceiving scale helps describe

whether you extravert when you are taking in new information (sensing and intuiting) or when you are making decisions (thinking and feeling).

The MBTI Types

Each type is then listed by its four-letter code:

- [ISTJ – The Inspector](#)
- [ISTP – The Crafter](#)
- [ISFJ – The Protector](#)
- [ISFP – The Artist](#)
- [INFJ – The Advocate](#)
- [INFP – The Mediator](#)
- [INTJ – The Architect](#)
- [INTP – The Thinker](#)
- [ESTP – The Persuader](#)
- [ESTJ – The Director](#)
- [ESFP – The Performer](#)
- [ESFJ – The Caregiver](#)
- [ENFP – The Champion](#)
- [ENFJ – The Giver](#)
- [ENTP – The Debater](#)
- [ENTJ – The Commander](#)

Taking the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator can provide a lot of insight into your personality, which is probably why the instrument has become so enormously popular. Even without taking the formal questionnaire, you can probably immediately recognize some of these tendencies in yourself.

According to the Myers & Briggs Foundation, it is

important to remember that all types are equal and that every type has value.

When working in group situations in school or at work, for example, recognizing your own strengths and understanding the strengths of others can be very helpful. When you are working toward completing a project with other members of a group, you might realize that certain members of the group are skilled and talented at performing particular actions. By recognizing these differences, the group can better assign tasks and work together on achieving their goals.

How MBTI Differs From Other Instruments

First, the MBTI is not really a “test.” There are no right or wrong answers and one type is not better than any other type. The purpose of the indicator is not to evaluate mental health or offer any type of diagnosis.

Also, unlike many other types of psychological evaluations, your results are not compared against any norms. Instead of looking at your score in comparison to the results of other people, the goal of the instrument is to simply offer further information about your own unique personality.

Reliability and Validity

According to the Myers & Briggs Foundation, the MBTI meets accepted standards of reliability and validity.

However, other studies have found that the reliability and validity of the instrument have not been adequately demonstrated.

Studies have found between 40% and 75% of respondents receive a different result after completing the inventory a second time.

A 1992 book by The Committee on Techniques for the Enhancement of Human Performance and the National Research Council suggests that “there is not sufficient, well-designed research to justify the use of MBTI in career counseling programs. Much of the current evidence is based on inadequate methodologies.”

The MBTI Today

Because the Myers-Briggs Personality Type Indicator is relatively easy to use, it has become one of the most popular psychological instruments currently in use today. Approximately two million U.S. adults complete the inventory each year.

While there are many versions of the MBTI available online, it should be noted that any of the informal questionnaires that you may find on the Internet are only approximations of the real thing.

The real MBTI must be administered by a trained and qualified practitioner that includes a follow-up of the results. Today, the questionnaire can be administered online via the instrument publisher, CPP, Inc., and includes receiving a professional interpretation of your results.

The current version of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator

includes 93 forced-choice questions in the North American version and 88 forced-choice questions in the European version. For each question, there are two different options from which the respondent must choose.

Source:

Cherry, K. (2021, July 23) The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator Guide. <https://www.verywellmind.com/the-myers-briggs-type-indicator-2795583>

Final Thoughts

This lesson is often a favorite for students. It can be fun to dive into better understanding our interests and our personality preferences and can lead to some interesting insights. The Strong can confirm career ideas the one has had and can also highlight some careers that may not have been considered. The MBTI can often help us articulate our preferences for interacting with others, making decisions, gathering information, and general overall being in the world.

Have fun with this material and remember to reach out to your instructor if you have any questions.

Chapter 5: Making Decisions

Decision Making

Decision making is a key component in choosing a career and it is often a difficult process for people. Most of us were not given much education or guidance on how to make a decision and therefore we often rely on habits we have built that may or may not support our best interests. The following are some reflection questions to get us started as we work to increase self awareness and increase decision making skills.

- How do you typically make decisions?
- Are they wise ones?
- Are they well thought out and researched, or are they impulsive?
- Are you often happy with the outcomes of your decisions?
- Do you tend to do what your parents, your partner, or others want you to do?
- Do you procrastinate because you have a hard time making decisions?
- Have you chosen jobs or careers because they sounded good or because you just had to pay the bills?

People often don't have a concrete decision making strategy when it comes to important decisions. How about romance? Decisions to marry or have children? We can be very impulsive in these areas of our lives! However, buying a house is often a slow, deliberate process possibly because there is so much involved. You might spend even more time in the decision making process when you are buying a car (researching options, test driving, fine tuning what you want [like color], etc).

The decision you are faced with now (what to study and what career to pursue) is really a BIG one! You are investing time, money, and energy to get your degree. So, let's talk about how to be thoughtful with this decision. Take your time. Don't rush. Don't choose a career out of frustration or because you feel rushed. If you haven't made a decision at the end of this class, that's ok. That just means that you need more time (or information) and that you are willing to spend additional time doing research and contemplating your choices. In short, we want your career/major decision process to look more like the car, as opposed to the romance, example above!

Decision making can be reliable, if you consider the following principles.

- Big decisions should be supported by big research, thorough analysis, time well spent in consideration, and thoughtful planning.
- After all that research, analysis and planning, however, we do need to consider our intuition and gut feelings as well!
- They say that career decisions should be made with a combination of both: research, weighing pros and cons, and being rational PLUS feelings, intuition and for some folks, spiritual guidance as well!

In this class, you are being asked to use a slow, rational, research-based process to decide on a career. However, I don't want you to feel obligated to pick a career by the end of this class! It's a huge decision. Again, take your time!

Before we dive into the specifics of a step-by-step process and learn about other tools that could be helpful in this process, we are going to share a video on *why* it is hard to make hard choices. The speaker, Ruth Chang, is a philosopher who was once a lawyer – she knows about making challenging decisions! She discusses the reasons why it is hard to make difficult decisions such as, neither option is better than the other and that sometimes there is no best

option, all are equal. She goes on to suggest that we have the power to create the reasons for choosing one thing over another. Thus, we become the ‘authors of our own lives’ since the reasons we choose thing one over thing two is because the reason came from within us, not from outside of us. Click here to watch the video: [Ruth Chang | How To Make Hard Choices](#)



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:

<https://mhcc.pressbooks.pub/hd208/?p=38#oembed-1>

Now that you are fully aware that this decision is yours to make and that you get to create the reasons behind your decision, let’s take a look at a solid decision making process. The following article outlines a thorough 5 step process to consider when make decisions. This could be a good model to follow as you are working on making your career decision. Note that the author suggests that even though this is linear, step by step process, at any point along the way you may need to go back a step or two or even start over.

5 Steps to Good Decision Making

By Kescia D. Gray

Each day we are faced with situations in life that require us to make choices. Some of these choices are easy, and at times, some of them can be difficult. Easy decisions consist of things like what clothing you should wear; most people choose what to wear based on the season of the year, the weather of the day, and where they might be going. Other easy decisions consist of things like what to

eat, what movie to see, and what television programs to watch.

Decisions that seem to be the most difficult are those that require a deeper level of thought. Examples of difficult decisions consist of things like where to attend college, what career path would be best, and/or whether or not to marry and start a family. These types of decisions are difficult because they are life changing decisions; they shape who we are, and they shape our future.

Making good decisions is a method that must be learned. It is not something with which we are innately born, but merely a step by step process that is usually ascertained from life experience. Most adults know that experience can be a costly, ineffective teacher that teaches more bad habits than good; and because decisions can vary so obviously from one situation to the next, the experience gained from making one important decision is often times of little or no use when another decision-making problem arises.

When decision making, there are many steps that can be taken; but when making good decisions there are really only five steps that need to be considered. These steps are as follows:

Step 1: Identify Your Goal

One of the most effective decision making strategies is to keep an eye on your goal. This simply means identifying the purpose of your decision by asking yourself what exactly is the problem that needs to be solved? And why does this problem need to be solved?

Figuring out what's most important to you will help you

make good decisions. When you know the reason why you have making a particular decision; it will better serve you in staying with it, and defending it.

Step 2: Gather Information for Weighing Your Options

When making good decisions it is best to gather necessary information that is directly related to the problem. Doing this will help you to better understand what needs to be done in solving the problem, and will also help to generate ideas for a possible solution.

When gathering information it is best to make a list of every possible alternative; even ones that may initially sound silly or seem unrealistic. Always seek the opinions of people that you trust or speak to experts and professionals, because it will help you to come up with a variety of solutions when weighing all your options for a final decision. You will want to gather as many resources as possible in order to make the best decision.

Step 3: Consider the Consequences

This step can be just as important as step one because it will help you determine how your final decision will impact yourself, and/or others involved. In this step, you will be asking yourself what is likely to be the results of your decision. How will it affect you now? And how will it affect your future?

This is an essential step because it allows you to review the pros and cons of the different options that you listed in the previous step. It is also important because you want to feel comfortable with all your options and the possible outcome of whichever one you choose.

Step 4: Make Your Decision

Now that you have identified your goal, gathered all necessary information, and weighed the consequences, it is time to make a choice and actually execute your final decision. Understanding that this step can cause some people a lot of anxiety is important because this is where you have to trust your instincts.

Although you may still be slightly indecisive about your final decision, you have to take into account how this makes you feel. Ask yourself, does it feel right? And does this decision work best for you now, and in the future? When you answer those questions back, you should feel good about the result.

Step 5: Evaluate Your Decision

Once you have made your final decision and put it into action, it is necessary to evaluate the decision and the steps you have taken to ensure that it works. This final step is probably just as important as step one, if not more important, because it will help you to further develop your decision making skills for future problems. This step is also fundamental because it may require you to seek out new information and make some changes along the way.

Remember, this step requires some patience and it can also encourage perseverance. Why? Because it may take some time to see the final outcome. Recognizing that if the first decision is not working, you may have to go back to step two and choose another option.

Always looking for and anticipating unexpected problems will help alleviate undue stress, if and when a problem occurs. Although these five steps can help assist in simplifying the decision-making process, there are

some common drawbacks that you must also take into account. Consider these

Misidentifying The Problem

Many times the problem will be obvious; but there may come a time when identifying the main problem is not that easy. When this issue arises, figuring out exactly what it is, and where you need to focus your efforts will save you a lot of time and energy in the long run

Having a Single Source

When considering the consequences, you must be open to a broad choice of alternatives in order to find the best solution. This can become a problem if you rely solely on a single source of information because that one source may not be reliable, or may not be completely inline with the problem; thus altering your chances of making the best decision

Having Too Many Sources

Having a variety of sources is usually not a bad thing; but not in every situation. Collecting as much information as possible can be very helpful at arriving to a decision, but an overload of information can leave you confused and misguided, and prevents you from following your intuition. Remember, trusting your gut instincts is a major key to making good decisions

Overestimating the Outcome

When making a decision and putting your plan into action you should have taken care to weigh all your valid options. Making a decision based upon an outcome that may not be plausible will not help you solve the problem

Poor Timing

Time can be a futile friend. Sometimes it is good, and sometimes it is not. When making major decisions, it is beneficial to take your time in order to make the best choice from your options. But understanding the timing process is crucial because sometimes it is best to delay a decision, and other times delaying a response can cause more problems. There are also times when making a quick decision is advantageous because it allows you more time to make necessary changes should problems arise.

In summary we all have to make many decisions throughout our daily lives. Some of these decisions require little effort, while others require more time and deeper thought before coming to a final solution. Remember, there are five basic steps to good decision making. Why is those five the ideal number? Because a significant part of decision making skills is understanding and knowing a simple technique; and also regularly practicing that technique.

When there are more steps than we can count on one hand, most people tend to either forget a step, or misconstrue the order in which the steps must be taken. If you follow these five steps, and also remember the common pitfalls previously addressed, you will be well on your way to making good decisions for yourself.

Source:

Gray, K.D. (n.d.) *5 Steps to Good Decision Making*.
Corporate Wellness Magazine.
<https://www.corporatewellnessmagazine.com/article/5-steps-to-good-decision-making>

The piece below, from the UC Berkeley Career Center, adds the pros and cons model of decision making and includes a worksheet. It

could be useful to create a pros and cons list for each of the careers you are considering. There is also a link to a visualization exercise which is an excellent way to consider careers (not to used on its own, of course). Finally, there is a worksheet you can use to list your values, or anything else that is important for you to have in a career, and then compare the three top careers you are considering. You can create your own form and use it to compare 10 careers if you want!

Using all of these strategies in conjunction with the more linear, step by step process could be really helpful.

Career Decision-making

Career decision-making is a complex and personal process. Just as you decided which university to attend, what classes to take, and where to live, selecting your initial career direction involves researching and evaluating many factors of importance to you.

Decision Making Tools

Pros & Cons Model

Use the Career Center's [Pros & Cons Table \(PDF\)](#) to help you evaluate both the positive and potentially negative outcomes of your impending decision.

Analytical Decision-Making Worksheet

Use the Career Center's [Decision-Making Worksheet \(PDF\)](#) to help you evaluate which of up to three options may be the best for you based on your values.

Visualization Exercise

If you are more of an intuitive decision-maker, you may prefer this imaginative [Visualization Exercise](#). You might have a friend or a Career Counselor lead you through the visualization, or you may just want to read it and imagine on your own.

Source:

UC Berkeley Career Center. (n.d.) *Career Decision-Making*.<https://career.berkeley.edu/Plan/ClarityDecide>

Recognizing that making a career decision is a big, important and sometimes challenging prospect, consider [meeting](#) with a Career Counselor who can offer support and help you with your process.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Think about a past decision that you made that ended in a positive outcome. What was your process?
- Think a past decision that you made where the outcome was not positive. What was your process in this case?
- How confident are you when it comes to making decisions?
- Have you ever used any negative decision making strategies such as delaying, complying with others, or

being impulsive? What was the outcome of that decision?

- What did you learn from the lesson that will help you make this career and/or college major decision more productive?
- Can you identify the decision making steps that you think will work best for you in this process?

PART 2

Chapter 6: Research: Exploring Career Information

PREPARATION

Before getting started on your research, take some time to consider all of the careers that have come to your attention through the various assessments and class activities you have completed over the past few weeks.

Up to this point, we have researched YOU. You should have a good idea of your:

- SKILLS [what are you good at, what natural talents do you have, what skills have you developed as a student or through previous work experience?]
- VALUES [what is important to you, what principles guide you through your day and life?]
- PERSONALITY [do you like to work with people or do you like to work alone, do you see the big picture or prefer to work with details, do you make decisions based on gut feeling or through rational thinking?]
- INTERESTS [do you like to help or persuade other people, do you like to solve problems, do you like to work with information, data or things, do you like to be creative?]
- PURPOSE [what fulfills you, makes 'your eyes shine'?]
- CHARACTER STRENGTHS [what are your positive traits that demonstrate your personal strengths?]

Are there patterns or themes that you've seen develop in the types of careers that have come up for you? Maybe careers in the health, education, business, construction, or outdoor sectors have been

showing up in a variety of ways. This is good! Maybe you've had a sampling of many different types of careers show up, this is ok, too! Are there any careers that you know you can cross off your list right now? Maybe some don't fit with your life plan? If so, cross them off! Make sure not to cross off a career just because you don't know what it entails – this is where research can help.

Now it is time to start doing research on what each career entails (how much education do you need? What is the salary? What is the job growth like? What do people in these different jobs actually do? Will it fit with your overall goals?

To analyze this information you will want to:

- Make a list of all the careers that have come up through the various assessments we have done in class. Ideally, you will want to generate a list of 5 -15 careers that you think you might be interested in.

The objective for the reading in this lesson, is to learn about the careers on your list and start to narrow your list down to a few viable options.

You might be wondering why the reading in this lesson appears to be so short. That is because the bulk of this week's reading will be done online as you research careers using the websites provided below.

Let's get started!

THE CAREER RESEARCH PROCESS

There are four steps to a good solid career research plan:

- **READ** – Read as much as you can about the different careers you are interested in. You can do this online, through trade journals, magazines and websites.

- **TALK** – Talk to people who are actually in the jobs you are considering. The most common way to do this is through informational interviewing – you will find out how to conduct these below.
- **OBSERVE** – Try a job shadow. Once you have your decision narrowed down to two or three possibilities, job shadow people in those fields. This will give you an experiential, first-hand look at the careers you are considering. Many professionals will be happy to have you follow them around one morning or afternoon to get a better feel for the job and atmosphere – this may be a particularly good method to use for intuitive style decision makers.
- **TRY** – Get a part-time job in an area you are interested in. If you are considering becoming an accountant, look for part-time jobs in an accounting office. This will give you a great look at the cycle of the work and the day to day differences.

For this class, you will be engaging in the first two step: READ + TALK. This lesson, specifically, will focus on the READ component.

INFORMATION TO CONSIDER

As you start your research, you will want to pay attention to the **job growth rate, size of the occupation, education or training needed, typical tasks for the job and the average pay rate** for each of the careers on your list. Here is some information on each of these areas:

- **Job Growth Rate** – not all jobs are growing at the same rate. If a job is growing at a rate equal to or faster than the national average, then you know that this field is growing with good opportunities for employment. If a job is growing slower than

the national average, you will need to take this into consideration while making your decision. This does not mean there will be absolutely no jobs out there, but they may be fewer and farther between.

- **Size of the occupation, employment trends or employment outlook** – how many jobs are out there for the careers you are considering? If it is a large or very large field, there will be more job opportunities. If it is a small field, there will still be opportunities, of course, but you may need to be willing to relocate or be very persistent in hunting down opportunities. Here’s an example: the field of air traffic controllers is considered “very small” with only 195 positions in the state of Oregon. The field of nursing assistants is “very large” with 12,040 positions in Oregon. [source: Career Information System- CIS]
- **Education and training** – will you need on the job training [OTJ], an associate’s degree, a bachelor’s degree, a master’s degree or a Ph. D. for the careers you are considering? If you only want to go to school for two (2) years and the career you are looking into requires at least a bachelor’s degree you will have more decisions to make (i.e. bump up the amount of time in school to earn the higher degree).
- **Tasks** – are the tasks involved with the job, those tasks that you find motivating and in line with your personality, interests and values?
- **Pay** – while you do not want to base your career decision on money alone, it is important to be aware of the earning potential for the jobs you are considering. If you currently make \$18.00 per hour as a bookkeeper but want to get into the medical field and work as a medical assistant, is it worth it to you to only make about \$14.00 per hour after earning an associate’s degree? It may be, but it also might not be. You may want to consider other health related programs with a higher earning potential based on your financial needs.

CAREER RESEARCH

Now that you have some ideas about the type of career information that is important to consider, let's take a look at *where to find reliable* career information. What do you think: Is a BuzzFeed article on the "15 Hottest Careers Right Now" going to be a good source for you? How about the "10 Highest Paying Careers Today?" Well, maybe – but maybe not. For one thing, these lists don't take into consideration YOU – your interests, values, skills, personality, etc. And you know that finding a career that fits YOU is more important than the "hottest careers" mentioned in an online article. You might also realize that the 'hottest careers' of today, may not be the 'hottest careers' of tomorrow.

So, we are back to focusing on the list of careers that you have been building upon during the course of this class. These are the careers that you think might be satisfying and rewarding to you. YOU have created the "10 Best Careers For Me" list, which is a better than any list randomly found online.

With all of this in mind, let's turn our attention to where to get the most reliable information on the careers that you have on your list.

- [Career Information System](#)
(Your instructor will give you the user name and password).
Click on *Occupations* (in the top green bar), click on *Explore Resources*, click on *Occupations*, then click on *Occupations List*.
This is a great resource, it just has many clicks!
- [O-Net Online](#)
- [Oregon Labor Market Information](#)
- [US Dept of Labor](#)
- [Oregon Healthcare Workforce Institute](#)

THE LONG AND WINDING ROAD

The process of career exploration in which you are involved is not always linear, easily defined, or instantly clear. For some of you, this may be your experience, but for most of us, this process takes time, effort, action, and patience. Take a look at this video to get an understanding of what this process could look like. Don't focus too much on the careers, just notice the process.

[The Fantasy, The Ideal, and The Reality of Career Exploration](#)

Reflection Questions

You've had a chance to get to know your personality, interests, skills, purpose (maybe), character strengths, and values. You have brainstormed many career options using the Strong Interest Inventory, the CIS Skills assessment, by participating in class discussions, and now, try to narrow your ideas down to the BIG 3. These are the careers that you think could be the best options for you.

Now consider, based on your research, how these occupations you researched fit with:

- Your interests?
- The skills you enjoy using most or would like to develop?
- Your work values, purpose, and character strengths?
- What you know about your personality style?

After doing some initial research on these occupations and comparing them to what you have learned about yourself, do you have a high, medium, or low interest in exploring any of these occupations further? Which one(s)? Why?

Are there general career fields (e.g. education, health care, etc.) that you will continue to explore? Why?

What conclusions can you draw from your research?

What other information do you need and/or want? How do you think you might find this information?

Chapter 7: Networking and Information Interviewing

Networking

You've heard the expression: "It's not what you know, it's who you know!" Well, there is a lot of truth to this saying. Although intelligence, job skills, and knowledge are all key to becoming satisfied in your career, it's just as important to have good people skills and the ability to use your contacts to achieve your goals. NETWORKING is critical to academic and career success.

Other very important ways to become successful:

- Seek internships. Internships are usually unpaid work experiences that help you train for a job AND get to know helpful people in your field. Many students end up getting jobs where they have completed internships!
- Continue to seek further training even after you start in your career. Every job can be a stepping stone to the next if you are strategic and good with people!
- Use multiple methods for networking. Networking can lead to internships, scholarships, jobs and other opportunities. So how exactly do you network? Networking can include the following strategies:
- Join one or more professional associations linked to your field of interest and start attending their local meetings. Students can often join for a lower fee, and others want to help students. You will find other professionals who really want to help you achieve your dreams.
- Volunteer at the college or in the community, particularly in the field you want to pursue. This will look GREAT on your

resume and scholarship applications. And you will meet people who will want to help you too.

In this week's discussion you will begin to practice the networking process by seeking out people for the Informational Interview assignment that will be due in two weeks.

Informational Interview

Informational Interviews

If you're looking for a new job or exploring a change of career, one of the best ways to learn about different fields and industries is to conduct **informational interviews** with people who have expertise in those fields. An informational interview is a conversation in which a person seeks insights on a career path, an industry, a company, and/or general career advice from someone with experience and knowledge in the areas of interest.

Informational interviews differ from job interviews because the conversation is not about hiring and not about a specific job. The knowledge seeker asks general questions about an industry, company, or career path, and the knowledge provider has an opportunity to learn about the knowledge seeker's character and qualifications outside of a formal job interview process.

Even though an informational interview is usually less formal than a job interview, it still requires preparation, and you'll find that it calls upon many of the skills you're

practicing in this public speaking course: research, audience analysis, crafting your message, delivering your message succinctly and professionally, active listening, and soliciting feedback, among others. Although each information interview situation will be different, the following steps can help you get started.^[1]

Step 1: Researching the Field

The more specific and focused you can be in each part of the interview process, the more you'll get out of it. In order to move from the general to the specific, we need to start with some research. Use the internet to find local companies or organizations that are involved in the field of interest, and try to find out as much as you can about terminology, subfields, and job titles. Check national job listings for the job titles you've found (websites like indeed.com can help). What qualifications are they looking for?

Step 2: Identify People to Interview

There are two ways to go about selecting people to interview: using your social and professional network or reaching out to people outside of your network. If you can use your network, you're more likely to have a successful response, but you may be able to get closer to the career field you're looking for if you reach outside your network. Your school's alumni network can be an excellent resource.

When you find someone you might want to talk to, find out what you can about their professional presence on the internet. Do they have a LinkedIn

profile? Is their resume posted somewhere? Is any of their work published or public in some way? The more you know about the person professionally, the more you can focus your questions to their specific situation. Note, however, that it is unwise (and unprofessional) to go digging into personal information about the person on the internet. It's not relevant to the situation, and there is a high risk of misidentification or misunderstanding.

Don't put all your eggs in one basket. It's best to compile a list of people you'd like to speak with (and some notes to remind yourself how you found them and why you want to talk to them).

Step 3: Prepare Your Introductory Message

Throughout this course, we've been stressing the need to tailor your presentation to your audience. This is very much the case for informational interview requests, especially if the person is outside of your immediate social network. Why are you contacting this person specifically? Do you have a shared connection somehow? Have you seen his or her work or something he or she worked on? Does his or her background or career path have similarities to yours?

In reaching out—usually via email, unless you've been invited to text or call—be clear and specific about what you're asking for.

- Mention how you got their name.
- Ask for a 20–30 minute appointment, at their convenience.

- Emphasize that you're looking for information, not a job.

Especially if you're cold-contacting someone (emailing someone without an introduction from a shared connection), you should not be surprised if your request is ignored completely. That's OK! Repeat Step 3 with the next name on your list. Use this opportunity to revise and refine your message.

Once someone agrees to meet with you, it's time to prepare for the interview!

Step 4: Conduct the Interview

Before the interview, you should prepare a list of questions you'd like to ask, but also be ready to go off script. You should spend time in advance thinking about what you want to learn from this particular person. The more specific and informed your questions are, the more useful the answers will be.

Dress professionally for the interview and make sure you arrive on time or early. Introduce yourself, thank them for coming, and remind them why you wanted to meet with them. Remind yourself (and, if an opportunity arises, your interviewee) that you're looking for information, not a job; this interview is about the interviewee and their experience, not about you and your qualifications. That said, don't expect the person you're meeting with to guide the conversation. You are responsible for asking the

questions that will bring out the information you're looking for. ^[2]

Remember that this interview is a speaking situation, not just a friendly chat (though it will probably be friendly as well). Speak clearly and concisely, and try to use specific, concrete, and professional language.

Step 5: Follow Up and Reflect

It's important to write down a record of the meeting as soon as possible afterwards, while the details are fresh in your mind. ^[3] Track not only what you learned and next steps, but also reflect on the interview itself. What went well? Did anything happen that you weren't expecting? What can you do more effectively next time?

Be sure to send a thank-you note within one or two days of the interview. Whether you write the note by hand or send an email will depend largely on how you reached the person, whether you have a physical address to send it to, and your personal preferences. Either way, you should try to be as specific as possible, and mention something about the interview that you remember. ^[4]

Source:

<https://courses.lumenlearning.com/wm-publicspeaking/chapter/informational-interviews/>

Designing Your Career: The Informational Interview

The video below will give you even more information about the importance of informational interviews. You will be reminded that an informational interview is not a job interview, you will learn the key to successful informational interviews, and finally, you learn 5 important tips to make this a great experience.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:

<https://mhcc.pressbooks.pub/hd208/?p=189#oembed-1>

More Resources for Informational Interviewing

[Informational Interviewing Tutorial: A Key Networking Tool](#)

[Identifying People to Interview](#)

[Questions to Ask at the Informational Interview](#)

[Informational Interviewing](#) is an article from UC Berkeley's Career Center webpage

And, from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, [Informational Interviewing](#) will give you even more information.

When you click on the assignment file in this lesson, you will see that there are some specific questions I would like you to ask. Please feel free to ask more questions if there is more information you would like.

Aim for your Informational Interview to last about 30 minutes or so.

Try It!

Conduct an Informational Interview with a professional in the field you are most interested.

Below you will find some good basic questions to ask. Please feel free to ask other questions that you have. The resources above have a lot of good ideas for other questions.

Note the following:

- Who did you interview?
- What is their occupation?
- What company do they work for?

Ask the following questions. Feel free to ask other questions that fit your interests.

1. What does an average day (or week) look like for you? (schedule, duties, activities, hours, etc.)
2. What are the working conditions? (Work environment)
3. What do you like and dislike about your job?
4. What type of education, training and prior experience is needed to best prepare for this occupation?
5. What specific skills and aptitudes are necessary to do this kind of work?
6. What might a new employee expect to earn in this field at an entry level ? (Starting to potential wages)

7. What are the opportunities for growth (advancement) in this field?
8. What is the current market like for this kind of work? Future outlook?
9. What advice do you have for someone like me who is thinking about pursuing this field?

Make sure to follow up by sending a Thank You note.

Chapter 8: College Majors and Training Programs

College Majors and Training Programs

Now that you have researched careers which interest you, let's take a look at what it will take for you to get there. In this chapter we will be looking at what educational requirements are needed for the careers that interest you.

Did you know that Mt Hood Community College, as well as other colleges, offer a variety of degrees? How long are you willing to attend college? Do you want to go part-time or full time? You will need to decide early on which degree you want to complete and at what pace. This will determine clearly what courses you need to take and when.

Associate and Bachelor degrees

First, let's talk about associate's degrees and bachelor's degrees. What's the difference?

An **Associate's degree** is typically called a two-year degree, and a **Bachelor's degree** is typically called a four-year degree. Well, that's not totally true because most students take longer to complete any degree! People are busy, run out of money, move, find new jobs, and drop in and out of school.

So when you hear two or four year degree, don't think you are locked into those time frames. You will decide how long you want to take to get your degree. But plan on several years in college at least if you want to make more than minimum wage in the future.

You may have noticed that the classes you take here at Mt. Hood Community College (MHCC) are numbered between 100 – 299,

generally, 100 and 200 level classes are called *lower division* classes and often correlate with freshman and sophomore status. These are the classes required for an **associate's degree**.

A **bachelor's degree** requires higher level classes (class numbers of 300 – 499 and are considered junior and senior level classes) and may eventually lead to higher level professional jobs and careers. For those of you who want a master's degree, you will first need to complete your bachelor's degree. Many community college students will get a “transfer” degree and then move to the university to get their bachelor's degree.

Below is a general introduction to this topic. You will also find links to specific information below as well.

Associate Degrees and Certificates

Community colleges offer associate degrees and certificates.

Let's take a look at the different types of associate degrees first. Associate degrees typically fall into one of two camps: career technical degrees and transfer degrees.

Career Technical Degrees. The Associate of Applied Science degree (AAS) typically is for students who want to attend school for a couple of years, get some intensive job training, and then head to work. Mt. Hood Community College has [dozens of these programs](#), such as nursing, graphic design, physical therapy assistant, or computer information systems. Again, the AAS degree is designed to give you the information, training, and skills you need to get an entry level job in that field. In these programs, you get a little general education and a LOT of training in one career. Community colleges specialize in these programs, and do a great job.

How do you get into these programs? Be aware that some of our Career/Technical degrees require you to [apply to them directly](#). These programs are called either **Restricted Entry** programs or **Limited Entry** programs and require that you take specific classes before you can apply (these are called *prerequisites*). If the program you are interested does

not say that it is limited or restricted, then it is **open entry** – meaning you can change your major to that program without completing an application for it.

Transfer Degrees. The Associate of Arts Oregon Transfer (AAOT) and the Associate of Science (AS) degrees are different from the AAS and are considered *transfer* degrees. All associate degrees require a minimum of 90 credits; however, a “transfer” degree is for people who are ultimately interested in earning a bachelor’s degree. These students attend community college for a couple of years and focus mostly on completing the lower division (freshman and sophomore level) general education classes required for a bachelor’s degree.

You will notice that at Mt. Hood Community College, there are several [AS transfer tracks](#). For instance, there is a specific track for students who know that want to transfer to a bachelor’s degree program in engineering, biology, computer science, business, liberal arts, and music.

However, these two “tracks” are not necessarily exclusive of each other. If you get a career technical degree (AAS degree) and then try to transfer to a university, you may have to take extra courses. However, colleges are doing a good job these days of creating “articulation” agreements that allow students to more smoothly transition from a vocationally-oriented program into a university degree. You will want to speak with faculty advisors in the career technical programs to make sure you know if/how your degree transfers.

For example, you could get an associate’s degree in mental health, social service & addiction counseling at MHCC (an AAS degree), work for a while, and then transfer later to PSU and get a Bachelor’s degree in social work because they have an agreement to allow this. One degree can help lead you to the next, although how smooth the transition is depends on the specific degree and whether articulation agreements are in place.

Another new development is that universities occasionally offer a BA degree right on the MHCC campus! This allows students to stay in the same place and take university level classes! For example,

Eastern Oregon University offers two BA degrees right on campus at MHCC, so you don't have to travel to LaGrande, Oregon! You will want to ask about all these options as you do your research and move forward.

Certificates and Short-Term Job Training. Maybe you don't want to go to college a long time and just need training for a job. You may be interested in one of the College's [Career Pathways Certificates](#). Check it out!

Perhaps you want to know more about [Apprenticeships](#)– Check it out!

Or maybe a certificate is all you need. The college offers 6, 9 and 12 month certificates in various programs. For example, you could pursue a one-year certificate to be a [Medical Office Customer Service Representative](#).

Links to Mt. Hood Community College Programs and Information

[Types of associate degrees at MHCC.](#)

MHCC's complete [Program Listing](#).

- Find out if the program you are interested in is a [Limited or Restricted Entry](#) program.

Know you want to transfer to a university? Here are our [Transfer Guides](#).

Interested in a career technical program? Check out our [Career and Technical Programs](#).

- Check out [MHCC Articulation Agreements](#) to see which career technical degrees are transferrable.

Reflection Questions

This chapter contains a lot of information to absorb. This reflection is designed to help you do some targeted thinking and research about your next steps

- Which [degree or certificate](#) are you leaning towards (i.e. AAS, AAOT, AGS, etc.) and in what [program of study](#) (i.e. Engineering, Respiratory Therapy, Graphic Design)?
- Discuss how long you are willing to stay in school, why you are leaning in this direction, and what you are still puzzled, concerned, or curious about.
- If MHCC doesn't have the program you want, for example radiology or veterinary technician, you might check the [PCC](#), [Clackamas](#), [Clark](#), and [PSU](#) catalogs.

Chapter Activity: College Program Report

The purpose of this activity is to:

- Help you make an academic choice that will support your long term career goal
- Learn how to investigate, in detail, college programs
 - Is the program open, limited, or restricted entry?
 - What, if any, are the pre-requisite classes?
 - Is there a strict class schedule that you must adhere to or is there flexibility in the schedule?

Complete research on one or more college programs (major) in which you are interested in completing. Investigate:

- MHCC programs (certificate or degree programs, transfer or career technical education programs)
- Other college or university programs (i.e. PCC, Clark, Clackamas, PSU, OSU, University of Oregon, or other schools in your area)

Conduct your research (see #4 below for specific information to research):

- Read and print, if you wish, information from college websites
- Talk to staff or faculty who may be available to answer questions.
- *Use the many links above to conduct your research.*

Write a paper of at least 500 words (two doubled spaced pages) following these instructions:

- **PART I:** Program description in detail:

1. What is the goal of the program (degree/certificate/job placement?). To what job or career is it designed to lead?
 2. Is this an open, limited, or restricted entry program?
 1. What, if any, are the requirements to be admitted, including course prerequisites?
 2. If limited or restricted, what date will applications be accepted?
 3. What term does the program begin?
 3. What is the suggested, or required, length of the program and courses or training topics that will be covered?
 4. What is the approximate cost of this program? (calculate estimated amount of tuition and fees plus books).
 5. Include links in your paper to the web information about this program online
- **PART II:** Reflect on how this program may or may not meet your needs:
 - Discuss how this program fit with your career goals.
 - If the program is limited or restricted entry, what is your plan to complete the prerequisite classes? AND, by what date would you plan to submit your application?
 - Does the program provide flexibility in determining your own pace or hours?
 - What excites you about this program?

- What fears or concerns do you have? What is your plan to overcome these fears/concerns?
- **PART III:** What additional information do you need to make a decision on whether this program is a good fit for you? Are there other programs you want to investigate? How would you go about getting that information and when?

NOTE: Do NOT copy and paste information directly from a website (i.e. do not plagiarize). This is a college report and is expected to be written by you. Please make sure to cite the sources you reference.

Chapter 9: Career Well-Being, Skills to Succeed at Work, and Professionalism

Career Well-Being

The first part of this chapter is going to focus on the dimension of wellness known as Career Well-Being. Career well-being is one of the 8 dimensions of wellness. When thinking of the impact of one's career on their overall health, consider this quote from the National Institutes of Health (Stoewen, 2017):

“People often think about wellness in terms of physical health – nutrition, exercise, weight management, etc., but it is so much more. Wellness is a holistic integration of physical, mental, and spiritual well-being, fueling the body, engaging the mind, and nurturing the spirit. Although it always includes striving for health, it's more about living life fully, and is “a lifestyle and a personalized approach to living life in a way that... allows you to become the best kind of person that your potentials, circumstances, and fate will allow.”

At this point in your career development journey it is okay to not know exactly what you want to do for your future career. Instead, it is more important to understand the vital role that a satisfying career plays in our lives and to continue working towards identifying a career that YOU find rewarding.

Occupational Well-Being

By: Claire Mansveld

What is Occupational Wellbeing?

Occupational (or career) wellbeing refers to feeling good about the work you do. It is answering “yes” to the question “Do you like what you do each day?” It has many facets, including achieving a balance between work and leisure, maintaining positive relationships with colleagues, managing workplace related stress, the safety of the workplace environment and the climate of the worksite. It also includes how you feel about work and whether your career option suits, stimulates and inspires you.

If your occupational wellbeing is strong, you will present as happier, healthier and more successful.

It is important to note that “career” or “occupation” is defined as how you occupy your time or what you do each day. It does not only mean paid occupations but also includes life roles such as domestic duties, volunteer work, community participation, school, or other activities.

Why is Occupational Well-being important?

Because day-to-day work (in whatever form) takes up so much of our time, it is important for our overall wellbeing that we like what we do. People who enjoy their employment have a greater sense of meaning and purpose.

From an employer’s perspective, workers’ wellbeing is a key factor in determining the effectiveness of an organisation. In fact, many studies show a link between the wellbeing of the workforce and levels of productivity.

Assessing your Occupational Well-being?

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Do I look forward to and enjoy going to work most days?
- Do I have a manageable workload? Am I happy with my work/life balance?
- Are my duties consistent with my values?
- Do I feel that I can talk to my boss and co-workers if problems arise?
- Am I happy with my career choice?
- Is my work stimulating and does it give me personal satisfaction?

If you answered “No” to any of the questions, this may be an area where you need to improve your occupational wellbeing.

Occupational Wellbeing and your Identity.

It is fundamental that we have something to look forward to when we wake up each day. When we meet people, one of the first questions we ask is “What do you do?” Your occupational wellbeing is more likely to be high if the answer to that question is a career you find fulfilling or meaningful. We spend the majority of our waking hours working and whatever activity you spend so much time doing inevitably shapes your identity.

We often underestimate how much our occupational fulfilment influences our overall wellbeing. If your occupational wellbeing is low, it can detrimentally affect all other areas of your life

Your Journey to Occupational Wellbeing

Occupational wellbeing is closely related to your attitude about your work (or vice versa) – it encompasses the personal satisfaction and enrichment you get from

your career. Since your career is such a big part of your life and you spend such a large amount of time doing it, it is important that you find a job that offers some enjoyment. Occupational wellbeing is about finding a career that challenges you yet gives you work/leisure balance.

One way to improve your occupational wellbeing is to find something you like about your career. We all have aspects of our work that we don't like, but focusing on even one small positive thing can help us handle the stressful aspects more effectively.

Source:

Mansveld, C. (n.d.) *Occupational Wellbeing*. Wellbeing Therapy Space.

<https://www.wellbeingtherapyspace.com.au/occupational-wellbeing/>

Some words of encouragement to those who have not yet discovered your path: Remember that *this is a process* and it is okay to not yet know which direction to take. Keep going, keep engaging in the process of identifying career choices.

Throughout this class you have learned about the many tools for identifying and choosing a career that is meaningful to you. You are on the right path, you have the tools, you know the process, and you have many resources to continue using while you are on this path of discovery.

SKILLS TO SUCCEED

Next, we will take a look at the important skills to help you succeed

in any career or job. No matter where you are at in your career development process, now is an excellent time to start thinking how to be successful on the job. You may be surprised to learn that success is not solely dependent on how well you know your craft. Instead, a large part of our success is dependent on soft skills and professionalism. Soft skills include people (interpersonal) skills, listening skills, communication skills, organization, time management etc. These are all skills you can be working on while you are on your path to your career.

The 12 Most Important Skills You Need To Succeed At Work

By Natalia Peart

I cover the intersection of psychology and the ever-changing workplace

Whether you're a new graduate trying to figure out how to get a leg up in your career, or you're a mid-career professional looking to secure your next promotion, you might be wondering what are the most important skills you need to help you get where you want to go. While it's, of course, important to develop your industry-specific hard skills, what's just as critical to your success are your soft skills. Soft skills are how you function in the workplace and interact with others. And while they're not easily taught in a classroom or measured, they are key skills that we all need to have. Additionally, in our more globalized, fast-changing work environment, there is now a premium on the kinds of soft skills that allow you to keep pace with the future of work. So, if you're looking to

accelerate your career, here are the 12 soft skills that you need to succeed.

1. Learnability

We'll begin with learnability because it is arguably the most important 21st-century skill you will need to succeed. Alvin Toffler said, "The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn." That's because, in an environment where new skills emerge as fast as others fade, success is less about what you already know and more about adapting your skills by growing and expanding your knowledge base, so you can use new information and skills to respond to whatever is happening.

2. Resilience

Setbacks and failures are a part of life, but how you choose to deal with those roadblocks is what is critical to your success. Resilience is the ability to bounce back in the face of obstacles and failures. When you are resilient, you don't focus on the ups and downs. Instead, you stay focused on your long-term goals, and you never lose confidence in your ability to prevail. By helping you face challenges and difficulties, resilience also enables you to handle stress more positively.

3. Agility

As the work landscape shifts, learning to be agile is a critical skill, as yesterday's solutions do not solve tomorrow's problems. At the heart of being agile is shifting gears when the context calls for it and responding accordingly to the needs of your workplace, clients or industry trends.

4. Collaboration

In our increasingly hyper-connected world, we're no longer expected to work just as individuals or only in silos. Our projects have become more complex, so the ability to work effectively as part of a team has also grown in importance. Given the increasingly global nature of work, your ability to collaborate, share knowledge and contribute to teams that can capitalize on a diversity of thinking and perspective in ways that everyone can benefit and drive to the shared outcomes is critical.

5. Verbal communication

Advancing in your career is not just based on what you do. There's a good chance that at some point in your career you'll have to use strong verbal communication skills so you can sell others on your ideas, products, or services. Whether you're needing to explain your value when you are being considered for a promotion, presenting as part of a team project, or speaking on stage, you need to be able to communicate well and convey strong, persuasive ideas.

6. Written communication

We live in an era of tweets and sound bites, but good written communication skills still matter when it comes to your career. Whether you are sending professional emails, communicating with a client, trying to deliver a coherent business plan, or anything in between, you should be able to communicate quickly, accurately and effectively.

7. Empathy

The ability to empathize with others, or see things from their perspective by understanding their emotions and reactions, is a fundamental part of how we interact with

one another. Communicating genuinely and authentically with others is vital because even in instances when you disagree with your coworkers on elements of a work project, for example, empathy allows you to demonstrate to others that they are seen and heard.

8. Creativity

Creativity is a crucial skill we all need because, in our fast-changing times, employers value employees who can look beyond the present and imagine future possibilities for their company. Creative workers are the ones who ask why. They question, they are curious, and in so doing, they develop new ideas and solutions.

9. Problem-solving

How often do you go beyond your immediate job as assigned and instead, use more knowledge, facts, and data to see gaps and solve problems? Being a good problem solver is essential because employers value people who can work through challenges on their own or as an effective member of a team by defining the issues, brainstorming alternatives, sharing thoughts, and then making sound decisions.

10. Leadership

The importance of building the right culture at companies cannot be overstated, so having the skills to be able to coach and empower others, and to motivate those around you do their best work, is highly valued for success.

11. Negotiation

Whether you're in salary discussions, finalizing a deal with a client, or trying to find common ground with your

teammates during a project, having strong and effective negotiation skills are extremely important. Being a good negotiator allows you to get to reach goals while you build relationships, which is a significant part of being successful in your career.

12. Technology

Technology is changing at an unprecedented pace, so even beyond the technical skills you need to master for your job, keeping up with technology is essential because of the tools that help you manage your career, differentiate yourself in the market, brand yourself, and build the critical relationships that you need to be successful.

Regardless of your chosen career path, building your soft skills is critical so you can set yourself apart from others in a competitive landscape.

Source:

Peart, N. (2019, September 10) *The 12 Most Important Skills You Need to Succeed at Work*. Forbes.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/nataliapeart/2019/09/10/the-12-most-important-skills-you-need-to-succeed-at-work/?sh=2873bf61c6ab>

Below is another article that touches on some of the same skills but also highlights other important soft skills to cultivate that will help you succeed.

Soft Skills to Help Your Career Hit the Big Time

You'd be hard-pressed to find professional skills that matter more than these.

By Daniel Bortz

You've got a reputation for being the best coder or editor or mechanic or whatever, but it amounts to little if you don't work well with others. Some of the most important professional skills for workers and employers alike simply can't be taught in a classroom or measured on paper. These traits are called soft skills and they're more crucial to your job search and overall career than you think.

According to the Monster Future of Work: 2021 Outlook survey, recruiters chose soft skills—topped by dependability, teamwork/ collaboration, and problem solving/critical thinking—as the most important skills they're seeking in new hires. Recruiters also anticipate this is the area where they'll see the biggest skills gaps in candidates.

What are soft skills?

Unlike hard skills, which can be proven and measured, soft skills are intangible and difficult to quantify. Some examples of soft skills include analytical thinking, verbal and written communication, and leadership.

Research from the Society for Human Resource Management found that technical abilities like reading comprehension and mathematics aren't prized as much

as soft skills, meaning you have to bring more to the table than, say, great sales numbers, coding languages, or test scores.

One reason soft skills are so revered is that they help facilitate human connections. “Soft skills are key to building relationships, gaining visibility, and creating more opportunities for advancement,” says Kathy Robinson, founder of Boston career-coaching firm TurningPoint.

Basically, you can be the best at what you do, but if your soft skills aren’t cutting it, you’re limiting your chances of career success. Read on to learn which soft skills are critical to have firmly under your belt and what steps you can take to acquire them.

Soft skills for your career

1. Communication

Why you need it: Both written and verbal communication skills are of utmost importance in the workplace because they set the tone for how people perceive you. They also improve your chances of building relationships with co-workers. Communication skills boost your performance because they help you to extract clear expectations from your manager so that you can deliver excellent work.

Why employers look for it: Workers are more productive when they know how to communicate with their peers, says Robinson. If you can clearly express the who, what, when, where, why, and how of a project, you’ll be a hot ticket.

How to gain it: One way to hone your communication and presentation skills is to join Toastmasters, a national organization that offers public speaking workshops.

2. Teamwork

Why you need it: A company's success is rarely dependent on one person doing something all by him/herself. Success is the result of many people working toward a common goal. When employees can synthesize their varied talents, everyone wins. (Bonus: Having friends at work can also boost your job satisfaction, a Gallup poll found.)

Why employers look for it: Employers look to team players to help build a friendly office culture, which helps retain employees and, in turn attracts top talent. Furthermore, being able to collaborate well with your co-workers strengthens the quality of your work.

How to gain it: To generate goodwill, lend a hand when you see a co-worker in need. ("Hey, I know you have a ton on your plate. How can I help?") Another way to build rapport is to cover for a colleague while she's on vacation, says business etiquette and career coach Karen Litzinger.

3. Adaptability

Why you need it: Soft skills help you manage reality. And the reality is, things don't always go as planned. Instead of digging in your heels, you need to be able to pivot and find alternate solutions. "Successful leaders are the ones who know how to be flexible when problems arise," says Robinson.

Why employers look for it: "The speed of change in any given workplace is so rapid," says Joel Garfinkle, executive coach and author of *Getting Ahead: Three Steps to Take Your Career to the Next Level*. Consequently, employers need workers who can adapt to industry shifts and keep the company current.

How to gain it: Push yourself to be an early adopter of change. “For example, adapting to technology without mourning what used to be true yesterday is crucial for people to be seen as someone who is capable of meeting new challenges,” says Garfinkle. Inquire about training sessions and offer to teach your co-workers what you learn.

4. Problem solving

Why you need it: When something goes wrong, you can either complain or take action. Tip: It’s the latter that will get you noticed. Knowing how to think on your feet can make you indispensable to an employer.

Why employers look for it: Nothing is a given. Companies rely on problem solvers—a.k.a. their top performers—to navigate unexpected challenges.

How to gain it: “Always approach your boss with a solution, not a problem,” says Robinson. So when an issue crops up, sit down and think through how you’re going to address it before bringing it to your boss’ attention.

5. Critical observation

Why you need it: Data doesn’t mean much if you don’t know how to interpret it. Is there a pattern emerging? What else should you be looking for? Being a critical observer can help make you a better worker all around.

Why employers look for it: Companies need critical thinkers—people who bring a fresh perspective and offer intuitive solutions and ideas to help the company get a leg up on the competition or improve internal processes.

How to gain it: To be a critical observer, you need to be able to analyze information and put it to use. One tactic is

to try to identify patterns of behavior at work. For example, does your boss actually read the weekly sales reports? What was her reaction to bad news in the staff meeting? What's the best time of day to approach your manager with a question? By observing how people respond to the constant flow of information you can better understand the critical aspects of improving business operations.

6. Conflict resolution

Why you need it: “Any time you put more than one person into an organization, there is going to be conflict,” says Robinson. “It’s human nature.” Therefore, being able to resolve issues with co-workers will help you maintain relationships with peers and work more effectively.

Why employers want it: Being able to constructively work through disagreements with people is a sure indicator of maturity—as well as leadership potential. Someone like this helps to promote a healthy, collaborative workplace.

How to gain it: The best way to resolve disagreements between co-workers is to address issues directly but delicately. So, when stepping in as a mediator, let both parties air their grievances in a judgment-free environment and then work together to find a solution.

7. Leadership

Why you need it: Having confidence and a clear vision can help influence your co-workers and get them on board with your ideas now and in the future. Displaying such leadership skills helps you gain visibility within an organization, which can lead to more opportunities for promotions or salary bumps.

Why employers want it: Bosses and managers are always looking for employees with leadership potential because those workers will one day be taking over the reins and building on the company's legacy.

How to gain it: Being a leader isn't merely about getting people to do what you want. Leadership means inspiring and helping others reach their full potential. One way to do that is to become the internship supervisor, which gives you the opportunity to manage people, learn how to motivate a team, and take on more responsibility.

Source:

Bortz, D. (n.d.) *Soft Skills to Help Your Career Hit the Big Time*. Monster. <https://www.monster.com/career-advice/article/soft-skills-you-need>

Professionalism

And finally, let's talk about professionalism. Acting in a professional manner regardless of what job you have or how much you like your job is always accessible and something to be considered. As you read the article below, think about the ways you act professionally right now. Also, think about the ideas that you think would help you improve your professionalism in the future.

Professionalism

Meeting the Standards That Matter

By The Mind Tools Content Team

Professionalism is a powerful quality. It allows you to fulfill your role to the best of your ability. It helps you to impress and inspire others. And it gives you a deep sense of satisfaction and self-worth.

What's more, professionalism is something that everyone can aspire to from day one of their career.

In this article we explain what professionalism means today, and show you how to act and feel like a professional – wherever you work.

What Is Professionalism?

As the saying goes, “Professionalism is not the job you do, it's how you do the job.”

Professionalism involves consistently achieving high standards, both visibly and “behind the scenes” – whatever your role or profession.

Some sectors, workplaces or roles have particular “rules” of professionalism. These may be explicit, such as an agreed dress code, or a policy for using social media. Other rules and expectations may not be written down, but they can be just as important – such as what is regarded as professional behavior at meetings, or even how people personalize their desks.

It pays to be observant, and to ask for clarification if necessary. “Fitting in” is a big part of professionalism, as it's a way to show respect, attention to detail, and a commitment to upholding agreed practices and values.

However, “being true to yourself” is just as important. True professionals don't follow rules mindlessly, and they know when and how to challenge norms. They're also

flexible, and they find their own ways to do things – while still maintaining high standards.

8 Characteristics of Professionalism

What are the attributes that will mark you out as a professional? Let's look at eight key characteristics:

1. Competence

As a professional, you get the job done – and done well. Your abilities match the requirements of your role, and you often produce results that exceed expectations.

But you never plow on simply for the sake of appearances. Instead, your professionalism allows you to manage your own and others' expectations, and to ask for support when necessary.

2. Knowledge

Professionalism involves developing detailed, up-to-date knowledge, which is often highly specialized. At every stage of your career you can strive to master your role – and keep adding to what you know.

It's also important to put your knowledge into action. Being professional means feeling confident to show what you know – not for self-promotion, but to help yourself and others to succeed.

3. Conscientiousness

Professionalism involves being reliable, setting your own high standards, and showing that you care about every aspect of your job. It's about being industrious and organized, and holding yourself accountable for your thoughts, words and actions.

But don't confuse conscientiousness with working

longer hours than everyone else or obsessing about details. True professionals plan and prioritize their work to keep it under control, and they don't let perfectionism hold them back.

4. Integrity

Integrity is what keeps professional people true to their word. It also stops them compromising their values, even if that means taking a harder road.

Integrity is bound up with being honest – to yourself, and to the people you meet. Your beliefs and behaviors are aligned, and everyone can see that you're genuine.

5. Respect

Professionalism means being a role model for politeness and good manners – to everyone, not just those you need to impress.

What's more, you show that you truly respect other people by taking their needs into account, and by helping to uphold their rights.

6. Emotional Intelligence

To be a true professional you need to stay professional even under pressure. This takes strategies for managing your emotions, plus a clear awareness of other people's feelings. In short, emotional intelligence is essential.

Sometimes, professionalism means keeping your emotions in check. But at other times it's important to express your feelings, in order to have meaningful conversations or to stand up for what you believe in.

7. Appropriateness

A big part of being professional is knowing what's

appropriate in different situations. It avoids awkwardness or upset, boosts your credibility, and helps you to feel secure in your role.

Appropriateness relates to outward appearances, such as dress, personal grooming and body language.

But it also covers the way you speak and write, the topics you choose to discuss, and how you behave with others.

8. Confidence

Well-founded confidence reassures and motivates other people, boosting your ability to influence and lead. It also pushes you to take on new challenges, because you don't fear damaging your professional reputation if things go wrong.

Professionalism makes you confident about what you're doing now, but always eager to do it better and achieve more.

How to Exhibit Professionalism

Now that we've seen the qualities that set professionals apart, let's explore ways to improve in each of these eight areas.

Improve Your Competence

Carry out a Personal SWOT Analysis to identify your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Then set SMART goals to plan your improvement.

Our article, 8 Ways to Prioritize Your Professional Development, shows how to lead your own learning and growth. It also explains how to work with others to boost the competence of your whole team.

Increase Your Knowledge

Don't let your knowledge and skills get outdated. Make a commitment to build expertise and to stay up-to-date with your industry.

As well as carrying out research, consider on-the-job training to maintain and develop detailed and relevant knowledge.

Use all the networking you do to stay well-informed about your industry as a whole. And see our Bite-Sized Training session, Building Expert Power, for ways to strengthen and apply your knowledge at every stage of your career.

Be Conscientious

Conscientiousness requires organization, so make regular use of To-Do Lists and Action Programs . You can also learn to be more conscientious by improving your concentration, to complete work more efficiently and accurately.

Resolve to honor your commitments and to learn from your mistakes, in order to develop strong personal accountability.

Role-Model Integrity

Start by defining your own values, then spot any gaps between them and the way you actually behave. Our guide to authenticity explains why this is a lifelong process, involving self-knowledge, willingness to reassess your priorities, and the ability to change your behavior.

Ensure that you're clear about the laws that apply to your work, as well as any policies that your organization has in place to support ethical practices. These might

include guidelines for fair procurement processes, or rules about accepting gifts from clients.

Whenever possible, explain your decisions and choices carefully. And do everything you can to make it easy for others to act with integrity, too.

Promote Mutual Respect

Make it a habit to be polite and kind to everyone you come into contact with. Notice what respectful behavior looks like in any given situation.

Sometimes you might need to develop your cultural understanding – and perhaps do some specific research before an overseas trip or an international meeting online.

You should also learn about any differences among your own people, so that you know how to help everyone feel safe, included and respected. A professional approach like this can help to create a culture of mutual respect.

Develop Your Emotional Intelligence

Start by increasing your awareness of your own emotions.

Then work on your ability to sense other people's emotions and needs. Active Listening is crucial here. You can also practice seeing things from other people's point of view, so that you empathize with them, and see how best to support them.

Tip:

Emotional Intelligence can be learned like any other professional skill. There's a range of practical strategies for this in our article, Emotional Intelligence.

Always Behave Appropriately

This takes “Cultural Intelligence,” driven by a commitment to respect cultural norms and thrive within different settings – which might be countries, organizations, or even different teams within one company.

It also requires understanding. Avoid making assumptions, do your research, be observant, and ask for advice if necessary. After that, it’s about consistently making the effort to get your appearance, communication and behavior spot-on.

Tip:

Remember that professionalism extends to social media, where inappropriate behavior is likely to be indelible. Social events, both on- and off-line, can also be challenging.

Boost Your Confidence

If you put the advice from this article into action, you can be confident that your professionalism will shine through.

However, if confidence is one of your weaknesses, use techniques for boosting self-confidence. Many professionals also have to manage Impostor Syndrome, so you may need to keep reminding yourself that you really are worthy of your role.

Key Points

Professionalism involves consistently achieving high standards, both in the work you do and the way you behave.

Being professional helps you to achieve high-quality

results, while impressing and inspiring others – and feeling good about yourself.

The eight core characteristics of professionalism are: Competence, Knowledge, Conscientiousness, Integrity, Respect, Emotional Intelligence, Appropriateness, and Confidence.

By finding ways to strengthen each of these attributes, you can become confident to act professionally wherever you find yourself working.

These qualities are particularly important when the normal “rules” of professionalism are blurred, such as when you’re working from home.

Source:

Mind Tools Content Team. (n.d.) *Professionalism: Meeting the Standards That Matter*. MindTools.
<https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/professionalism.htm>

Final Thoughts

Some key take-aways from this chapter that will allow you to find greater success no matter where you work or what position you hold:

- People who enjoy their employment have a greater sense of meaning and purpose. This is occupational well-being and highlights the impact of one's career on their life.
- Some basic skills needed to succeed in the workplace, as outlined by Natalea Pearta, are: learnability, resilience, agility, collaboration, verbal and written communication, empathy, creativity, problem solving, leadership, negotiation, and technology skills.
- Daniel Bortz stressed the importance of the following soft skills that, if used, will help you succeed in any job or career: communication, teamwork, adaptability, problem solving, critical observation, conflict resolution, and leadership.
- The Mind Tools Content Team identified competence, knowledge, conscientiousness, integrity, respect, emotional intelligence, appropriateness, and confidence as the 8 core characteristics of professionalism.

Reflection Questions

Career Well-being

- Why do you think career well-being is important?
- How much of an impact do you think your career will make on your overall life and life satisfaction?

Job Success Skills

- From the two articles that outline skills to succeed on the job, which skills do you already use?
- What skills can you adopt and implement?
- Why or how do you think they might help you be more successful?
- How would you go about learning more about those skills?
- Are there skills you have used to be successful at work that aren't listed in either of the articles? If so, what are they and how did they help you be successful?

Professionalism

- Can you identify some of the ways you act in a professional manner at work (either in the current or past)?
- What are some areas of professionalism that you can improve upon or start to engage in?
- Are there ways you have acted, either in the current or past, that demonstrate you are a professional and aren't listed in the article above? If so, what are they and how did they add to your professionalism?

Chapter 10: Setting Goals + Creating a Plan

Setting Goals

It's important to think about short and long term goals, write them down, and pursue them! A **long-term goal** is usually something that is big and takes a while, and may feel daunting to you! A **short-term goal** is smaller, more manageable, more concrete, and immediate. In order to be successful, one must learn how to set and work towards both.

Here's an example: Let's say you want to become an RN. Well, that may seem like a daunting goal since nursing programs are highly competitive and require excellent grades in science and anatomy classes, along with some medical job experience. How do you break this into manageable goals? By setting short-term goals that lead to your long term goal! It might look something like this:

- First: Become a certified nursing assistant.
- Second: Earn really good grades in all your basic classes.
- Third: Earn really good grades in anatomy and physiology.
- Fourth: Maybe do some volunteer work in the community to set you apart from other candidates.
- Fifth: Apply to nursing programs (tip: apply to all community college and university nursing programs to improve your chances of getting in!).
- Sixth: Get a nursing job and start your career!

This process could take five years just to get into nursing school, depending on where you start when you begin.

Perhaps you are planning to get a BA or BS degree? Why? Why

not? Do you need more time to consider? What are your long-term goals? Perhaps you prefer to break down your goals into small steps and see where they lead you, rather than making a final long-term plan now, not knowing what opportunities might appear for you in the future?

As you think about your many options, do reassure yourself that the best laid plans can go awry! There is a certain magic in trusting that the path will reveal itself as you move forward, without knowing exactly where you are headed. As long as you carry your career development tools with you and ask for lots of input and guidance along the way, good things will happen, surely!

Many people do plan to get a bachelor's degree, and for good reasons. Although this degree takes longer and costs more money than a vocational degree at a community college, it can eventually lead to higher wage jobs and opportunities. In the case of some careers, you HAVE to get the bachelor's degree because you are required to go even further and get a master's degree.

For example, to be a social worker with an MSW (*Master's degree in Social Work = better pay, better benefits, better security*) you would have to earn a bachelor's degree *and* a master's degree, too. Some bachelor degrees have a career path, like the MSW; however, some do not. Simply earning a bachelor's degree, without any job training or vision with it, could land you a low wage job at first, but then open more doors for you later! However, it will always be up to you to take the initiative needed to get into the career you want.

Below are three articles that discuss the process of setting goals. The first article, *Balance Your Goal Setting*, reminds us that it is also important to set goals in other areas of your life. The second two articles are aimed specifically at your career development goals.

Balance Your Goal Setting

To give a broad, balanced coverage of all important areas in your life, try to set goals in some or all of the following categories:

- *Artistic*: Do you want to achieve any artistic goals? If so, what?
- *Attitude*: Is any part of your mindset holding you back? Is there any part of the way that you behave that upsets you? If so, set goals to improve or cure the problem.
- *Career*: What level do you want to reach in your career?
- *Education*: Is there any knowledge you want to acquire in particular? What information and skills will you need to achieve other goals?
- *Family*: Do you want to be a parent? If so, how are you going to be a good parent? How do you want to be seen by a partner or by members of your extended family?
- *Financial*: How much do you want to earn by what stage?
- *Physical*: Are there any athletic goals you want to achieve, or do you want good health deep into old age? What steps are you going to take to achieve this?
- *Pleasure*: How do you want to enjoy yourself? – you should ensure that some of your life is for you!
- *Public Service*: Do you want to make the world a better place by your existence? If so, how?

Source:

Mind Tools Content Team. (n.d.-b). *Personal Goal Setting: – Planning to Live Your Life Your Way*. Mind Tools. <https://www.mindtools.com/page6.html>

How to Set Short- and Long-Term Career Goals

BY DAWN ROSENBERG MCKAY Updated December 09, 2019

You may feel setting long-term and short-term goals is a waste of time, especially if you live by the old proverb, “Man plans, God laughs.” Don’t make that mistake. Not planning for the future can make for a chaotic one.

How Setting Goals Affects Your Career Success

Setting goals is a significant component of the career planning process. To have a successful and satisfying career, define your goals and devise a strategy to achieve them. A roadmap that will take you from choosing an occupation to working and succeeding at it is called a **career action plan**.

Your career action plan must have both long and short-term goals. It is imperative to include the steps to take to

reach each one, along with ways to get around barriers that might get in your way. Since plans, even very well-thought-out ones, don't always work out, it is also essential to include alternatives to implement when the need arises.

The Difference Between Short and Long Term Goals

Goals are broadly classified into two categories: short-term goals and long-term goals. You will be able to accomplish a short-term goal in approximately six months to three years, while it will usually take three to five years to reach a long-term one. Sometimes you can achieve a short-term goal in fewer than three months and a long-term one may take more than five years to complete.

To achieve each long-term goal, you must first accomplish a series of both short-term goals and additional long-term goals. For example, let's say you aspire to become a doctor. That may be your ultimate long-term goal, but before you can tackle it, you must achieve a few others, for example, complete college (four years), medical school (another four years), and a medical residency (three to eight years).

Along the road to reaching those long-term goals, there are several short-term goals to clear first. They include excelling in entrance exams and applying to college, medical school, and eventually residencies. Since grades matter when it comes to achieving those goals, it is necessary to break your short-term goals down even further, like earning a high-grade point average.

7 Ways to Increase Your Chances of Reaching Your Goals

Your hard work will play the most prominent role in your success, but if you don't formulate your goals correctly, it will be much more challenging to accomplish them. Your short-term and long-term goals must meet the following criteria:

1. **Have specific goals.** You might say, "I want to be successful." Well, who doesn't? But can you define what success means? Success to one person may mean becoming CEO of a company while to another person it may mean getting home from work by 6 p.m. every day.
2. **Your goals must be measurable.** Have a timeframe for achieving your goals and a way to determine when you have reached them.
3. **Don't be negative.** Your goal should be something you want rather than something you want to avoid. It is much better to say, for instance, "I want to improve my skills over the next four years so that I qualify for a better job" than "I don't want to be stuck in this job for another four years."
4. **Be realistic.** Your long-term goals must be compatible with your abilities and skills. Stating "I want to win a Grammy Award" if you can't sing or play an instrument will set you up for failure.
5. **Your goal must be reachable within your**

time frame. Break a long-term goal down into smaller goals. It is better to take baby steps than one big giant leap.

6. **Pair each goal with an action.** For instance, if your goal is to become a writer, sign up for a writing class.
7. **Be flexible.** Don't give up if you encounter barriers that threaten to impede your progress. Instead, modify your goals accordingly. Let's say you need to continue working will keep you from [going to college](#) full-time. Although it won't be possible to finish your bachelor's degree in four years, you can enroll in school part-time and take a bit longer. Flexibility also means being willing to let go of goals that are no longer meaningful and instead put your energy into pursuing other ones.

Source:

Rosenberg Mckay, D. (2019, December 9). 7 Ways to Set Short and Long Term Goals for Your Career. The Balance Careers. <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/goal-setting-526182>

How to Set and Achieve Goals

Stay motivated, committed, and moving forward

SUSAN M. HEATHFIELD Updated September 03, 2019

Goals Accomplishment Based on Values

One recommendation is to link each goal to a value. For example, if diversity in the workforce is a value your organization advocates, then at least one goal must further diversity.

Establish short-term, mid-term, and long-term goals based on the solid foundation of your values, or your company's values. If your goal is congruent with and allows you to live your most important values, you are more likely to accomplish the goal.

Your work-life balance is an important part of achieving your goals. When you are achieving your personal goals, you are more likely to succeed in achieving organizational goals because you are balancing your life.

If you have not considered setting goals for your non-work life, you could set goals such as time with your family, continuing education or physical fitness.

You are less likely to experience conflicting priorities if the important aspects of your life have a value-based goal. Some areas to consider having goals set in might be:

- Family and home
- Financial and career
- Spiritual and ethical
- Physical and health
- Social and cultural
- Mental and educational

Create a Plan

The problem most people have with goal accomplishment is creating a workable plan. Creating a plan might seem to be complicated at first, but it doesn't have to be.

Your plan for your goal should be set up in smaller achievable milestones that relate to the overall goal. If your plan is to complete your bachelor's degree, there will be specific tasks you need to accomplish, which are measurable and achievable. These goals will be realistic and be time-based. This is known as a SMART goal.

The tasks you need to accomplish for your degree are the classes you need to take. The classes will be measured by the grades you receive, and they will be achievable with hard work.

College class completion is a realistic goal, and there are time limits to each class. As you complete each one, you move to the next.

As you set your goals, think of moving to different classes in high school or college. You always have to complete one to move to another, and you can do several subjects simultaneously.

SMART Goals

Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timed (SMART) goals allow you to develop objectives which you

can attain. Goal failure usually occurs when the goals are not achievable or realistic, which leads to frustration and eventually quitting.

A specific goal is not ambiguous. Going to college is an ambiguous goal. Achieving a bachelors of science in management is a specific goal.

A goal needs to be measurable so you can track your progress. Each level of education is labeled as a grade or level. Each level and grade have a number of class credits required for progression. Classes in each level are worth a certain amount of credits. This system allows you to measure your progress.

A goal that is not achievable isn't a goal. You'll need to ensure your goals are obtainable, similar to the way classes are achievable.

Realistic goals are much more likely to be completed. Completing a college program without studying or attending classes is not a realistic goal. There are some people capable of this, but realistically you'll need to work for it.

Goals should be time-based. This means that you should set deadlines for yourself. If you decide to get your degree in accounting, but don't give yourself a deadline, the chances of succeeding are low because you won't be driven to finish.

Advertise Your Goals

Remind yourself of your goals daily. It helps to write them down and place them where you can see them. You

might think about motivational notes to yourself at your workspace, on your dashboard, or on the mirror. Reminder alarms set on your phone with motivational messages might work for you.

Whichever method you choose to advertise your goals, read them every time you see them, and re-commit to them every time you do.

Share Your Goals With Others

Friends and family will almost always support your goals. You should consider sharing them. Your manager is likely to support your objectives as well since your successes are her successes.

The people closest to you are the greatest source of motivation you have. They can remind you that you should be doing something, or check in on your progress. Even the comments you receive from naysayers can be turned into motivational energy. *You'll never do that, you might as well give up!* is a statement that might fuel you to achieve more.

Check Progress Regularly

One of the weaknesses of the annual performance review system is the lack of frequency of progress measurement and tracking. You are more likely to accomplish the goals you set if you review your progress at planned intervals as part of your normal routine.

Whether you use a paper planner, a smartphone, or a computer, enter your goals and schedule daily and weekly actions that support their accomplishment. The discipline of the regular review is a powerful goal accomplishment tool.

Address or Eliminate Obstacles

Simply tracking your goals daily is not enough. If you're unhappy with your progress, assess what is keeping you from accomplishing the goals. Ask yourself questions such as, "Is there something I could be doing differently?" or "is there a different approach to this?" Perhaps you could reevaluate the goal-related task to ensure it aligns with your plan and is attainable and realistic.

If you are not making progress on a particular goal, attempt to do a root-cause analysis to determine why. A root-cause analysis is a systematic way of identifying a problem, such as reviewing all the steps in a process to figure out what is wrong.

Only by honestly analyzing your lack of progress can you determine the steps to take to change.

Reward Goal Accomplishment

Even the accomplishment of a minor goal is cause for celebration. Don't depress yourself with thoughts about all that you still have to do. Celebrate what you have done. Then move on to the next milestone.

Changing Goals

Periodically look at the goals you have set. Are the goals still the right goals? Give yourself permission to change your goals and resolutions based on changing circumstances.

Don't spend an entire year failing to achieve a particular goal. Your time is better spent on achievement than on beating yourself up for lack of progress. Maybe you made the goal too big or maybe you set too many goals. Do an honest assessment, change what needs to be changed, and keep moving on.

Source:

Heathfield, S. (2019, September 3). *How to Set and Achieve Goals*. The Balance Careers.

<https://www.thebalancecareers.com/how-to-set-and-achieve-goals-1918137>

Chapter Activity: 5 Year Goals & Plans

Is it realistic to write a Five Year Plan? Who knows what will happen in five years? And, what if you aren't sure what career or program you want to pursue? Many of you will

need more time to complete your research and decision making.

Here's the good news: There is no need to rush or be impulsive. You can still write a Five Year Plan without a specific career decision. If you haven't made a decision, however, *your plan must include*:

- What research and investigation will you complete to help you make that decision?
- When do you hope to have finalized and committed to a specific college program or degree?
- In the meantime, what courses and resources will you pursue to continue on a successful college journey?

This plan will help you to at least set some short-term goals for the next six months to a year. And, this plan will also help you evaluate your strengths and weaknesses as you move forward. Take some time to consider the following questions:

- Are you as confident as you would like to be?
- Are you exercising, eating right, and getting enough sleep (7 – 8 hours each night)?
- Are you avoiding alcohol and drug excess that might be getting in your way?
- Do you have the funding you need for school or do you need to apply for scholarships?
- Do you need to spend time with an academic advisor?
- What steps do you need to take in order to be successful in school and to create a clear academic and career path for yourself?

- How will you know you have achieved your short-term goals?
- How do your short-term goals lead to long-term goals?

This is your opportunity to reflect on the work you've done this term and to use your new knowledge to plot your course forward.

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