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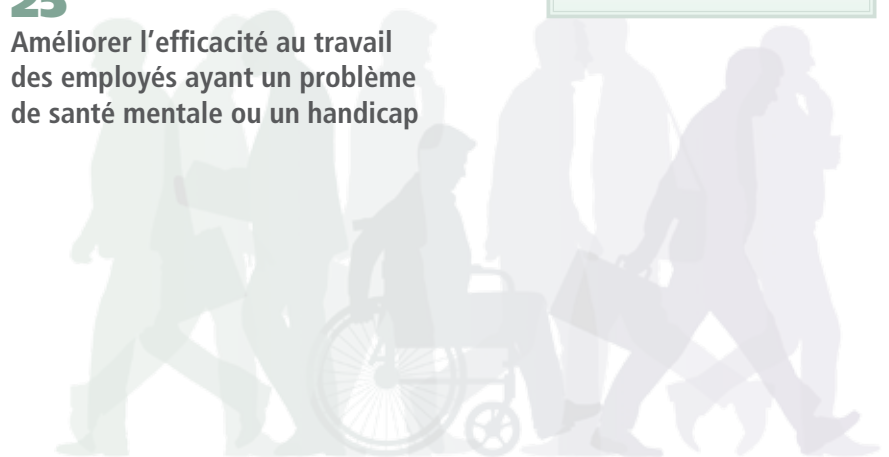
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Lindsay Purchase

Hello, readers. My name is Lindsay Purchase, and I'm excited to share with you my first *Careering* issue as CERIC's new Content & Communications Editor. While you will continue to find the thought-provoking, informative articles that make *Careering* a must-read, you may also notice some new features (check out our infographic on page 20) and design shifts going forward as we continue to look for ways to serve you better. Inside our Navigating Mental Health and Disability issue, you will find themes of resilience,

shifting perspectives and support networks; these have resonated with me as I have navigated my own career transition, and I hope they will for you as well.

As a society, we have a growing awareness of mental-health issues. We are becoming more accepting of physical and mental differences in the workplace. And yet, we have a long way to go in tearing down barriers to work for people living with disabilities or mental illness.

With one-third of Canadians experiencing a mental illness in their lifetime (Public Health Agency of Canada) and 3.6 million Canadians projected to be living with a physical disability by 2030 (Conference Board of Canada), professionals working in career development have an important role to play. How do resilience and wellness factor into career development? How can workplaces, schools and career development practitioners better support people with disabilities? In this issue, we explore these questions and many more.

First, Dr Marie-Helene Pelletier outlines the barriers people on leave due to mental-health issues can encounter upon their return to work. Then, Mary Ann Baynton explains how jobseekers can build resilience to more effectively handle the challenges of career transition.

We are also launching our new Client Side feature, in which a jobseeker reflects on successes and struggles in their career development. Here, Rebecca McMurrer shares her journey to finding meaningful employment in nursing after being diagnosed with a progressive condition that caused her mobility to deteriorate.

Also, in this issue's Case Study, Teresa Francis shares her experience of helping a successful stage actor find confidence in his strengths to start a new phase of his career.

If you have feedback on our print articles or our web exclusives, or if you have ideas about how we can make *Careering* even better, I would love to hear from you. Have an article idea for our next issue? Take a peek at our upcoming theme and view our submission guidelines at contactpoint.ca/careering. Happy reading!

Bonjour chers lecteurs! Je m'appelle Lindsay Purchase. Je suis heureuse de vous présenter mon premier numéro du magazine *Careering* à titre de nouvelle rédactrice en chef, Contenu et communications. Vous continuerez de trouver dans *Careering* les articles informatifs et stimulants qui font de notre magazine une lecture essentielle. Vous y remarquerez aussi cependant quelques nouveautés (consultez le document infographique à la page ##) et des changements à la présentation, car nous continuons de chercher des façons de mieux vous servir. Les thèmes de ce numéro, qui traite de handicaps et de troubles de santé mentale, sont la résilience, l'évolution des mentalités et les réseaux de soutien. Ces thèmes m'ont touchée, car je les reconnais dans ma propre transition de carrière. J'espère qu'ils vous toucheront aussi.

Notre société est de plus en plus consciente des problèmes de santé mentale. Nous acceptons de mieux en mieux les différences physiques et intellectuelles au travail. Et pourtant, il reste beaucoup de chemin à faire dans l'élimination des obstacles au travail pour les personnes ayant un handicap ou une maladie mentale.

Parce que le tiers des Canadiens auront une maladie mentale au cours de leur vie (Agence de la santé publique du Canada) et qu'on estime que 3,6 millions de Canadiens auront un handicap physique d'ici 2030 (Conference Board du Canada), les professionnels du développement de carrière ont un rôle important à jouer. Quelle est l'incidence de la résilience et du bien-être sur le développement de carrière? Comment les milieux professionnels, les écoles et les intervenants en développement de carrière peuvent-ils mieux soutenir les personnes ayant un handicap? Le présent numéro explore ces questions et bien d'autres.

Tout d'abord, la psychologue Marie-Hélène Pelletier discute des obstacles auxquels font face les employés en congé pour un problème de santé mentale à leur retour au travail. Ensuite, Mary Ann Baynton explique comment les chercheurs d'emploi peuvent accroître leur résilience afin de mieux composer avec les défis de la transition de carrière.

Nous lançons aussi une nouvelle chronique où un chercheur ou une chercheuse d'emploi témoigne de ses réussites et de ses difficultés dans le développement de sa carrière. Dans le présent numéro, Rebecca McMurrer se confie sur sa quête d'un emploi gratifiant en soins infirmiers à la suite d'un diagnostic d'affection progressive causant une détérioration de sa mobilité.

Dans la rubrique des études de cas, Teresa Francis nous raconte comment elle a aidé un célèbre comédien à faire confiance à ses forces pour entreprendre une nouvelle étape de sa carrière.

N'hésitez pas à me communiquer vos commentaires sur les articles de notre magazine papier ou nos exclusivités Web, ainsi que vos idées d'amélioration du magazine *Careering*. Vous avez une idée d'article pour notre prochain numéro? Voyez notre prochain thème et prenez connaissance de nos directives de soumission à contactpoint.ca/careering. Bonne lecture!



Overcoming barriers to returning to work after a mental-health leave

Surmonter les obstacles au retour au travail après un congé pour un problème de santé mentale

Dr Marie-Helene Pelletier

Career development practitioners can work alongside health professionals to help clients consider all possible return-to-work options during their recovery

Les professionnels du développement de carrière peuvent travailler en collaboration avec des professionnels de la santé pour aider les clients à envisager au cours de leur rétablissement, toutes les options de retour au travail possibles



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The facts are clear: mental-health issues represent on average more than 30% of long-term disability (LTD) claims (Mental Health Commission of Canada), with half of those claims for depression (Sun Life Financial). It is no surprise that career development and health professionals are bound to be working at some point with individuals off work due to a mental-health issue.

Whether I'm speaking with professionals who support people on leave, or individuals off work because of a mental-health issue, three barriers to a return to work consistently emerge. Here's a quick overview of each – and how they can be overcome.

Les faits sont clairs : les problèmes de santé mentale représentent en moyenne plus de 30 % des réclamations pour invalidité de longue durée (Commission de la santé mentale du Canada). Près de la moitié de ces réclamations touchent la dépression (Financière Sun Life). Il n'est donc pas étonnant que les professionnels en développement de carrière et en santé soient appelés à travailler à un moment ou un autre avec des employés en absence de travail due à un problème de santé mentale.

Que je m'entretienne avec des professionnels qui fournissent du soutien aux employés en absence de travail ou à des employés en absence en raison d'un problème de santé mentale, trois obstacles au retour au travail reviennent sans cesse. Voici un aperçu de chacun de ces obstacles et de la façon de les surmonter.



Barrier #1 – I can't picture myself going back to work at all

I hear this in my office regularly – and it's not surprising, given how the cloud of depression can influence our thoughts. My answer is a simple one: advise your client to focus first on their return to good mental health. Your client's health professional will have their return to work in mind from the beginning and will help them move in that direction. One of an individual's key accountabilities while on leave is to seek treatment and take an active role in it. So, if they're seeing a psychologist, a physician and accessing other resources as needed, they're on the right track. The details of their return to work will emerge as recovery gets closer.

Barrier #2 – I'm not sure I can return to optimum health

Leave optimum health aside and focus on a return to simple, everyday functioning where a return to the workplace in some capacity is possible. Insurance carriers work hard with health professionals to keep individuals focused on a return to work (as opposed to working on everything that could be optimized). Small steps can eventually lead to big gains and a return to pre-disability performance.

Barrier #3 – I'm not sure I can handle my old job

The truth is that there are many paths available to individuals, and only one of them is a return to their full-time job, typically with a gradual return schedule. An individual may be cleared to return to work by their physician and psychologist, they let the employer know and a gradual return to work is agreed upon. The individual starts work two weeks later and gradually assumes more responsibility, with the individual touching base with their psychologist a few times.

There are many other scenarios, including the employee assuming another job with the employer, or leaving the employer entirely for another organization. The time off to recover is also a time off to reflect – and it's a tremendous opportunity for individuals to think about their work role and where they believe they can excel and want to be.

As professionals, part of what we do is support an individual in their return to good health and encourage them to consider all possible paths as they re-enter the workforce. ■

AUTHOR BIO

Dr Marie-Helene Pelletier is a bilingual practicing psychologist and experienced senior leader with the rare combination of PhD and MBA. She helps individuals and businesses increase health and performance via her individual therapy practice and workplace mental health consulting and as a resilience keynote speaker. Connect with Dr Pelletier on drmhpelletier.com, LinkedIn and Twitter.

Obstacle no 1 – Je ne m'imagine absolument pas retourner au travail.

Cette phrase, je l'entends souvent à mon cabinet. Ce n'est pas étonnant, compte tenu de l'influence qu'exerce le « nuage » de la dépression sur les pensées. Ma réponse est simple : rappelez à votre client de se concentrer tout d'abord sur son retour à une bonne santé mentale. Le professionnel de la santé de votre client a à l'esprit le retour au travail de celui-ci et l'aidera à cheminer dans cette direction. Une des responsabilités premières de l'employé en absence de travail est d'avoir les bonnes ressources et de participer activement au traitement. Donc, en consultant un psychologue et un médecin et en accédant à d'autres ressources au besoin, il est sur la bonne voie. Les détails de son retour au travail se clarifieront lorsqu'il aura récupéré.

Obstacle no 2 – Je ne suis pas persuadé(e) de pouvoir retrouver une santé optimale

La santé optimale n'est souvent pas l'objectif le plus utile : concentrez-vous sur le retour à un fonctionnement au quotidien qui permet le retour au travail dans une certaine capacité. Les compagnies d'assurances travaillent fort avec les professionnels de la santé pour garder les employés concentrés sur leur retour au travail (au lieu de travailler sur tous les aspects pouvant être optimisés). Les petits pas finissent souvent par entraîner de grands gains et un retour au rendement d'avant le problème de santé mentale.

Obstacle no 3 – Je ne suis pas persuadé(e) de pouvoir occuper mes anciennes fonctions

En vérité, de nombreux chemins s'offrent aux employés. Un seul de ces chemins est un retour à leur emploi à temps plein, généralement de façon progressive. L'employé reçoit le feu vert de son médecin et de son psychologue pour reprendre le travail. Il en informe son employeur et un horaire de retour progressif est établi. L'employé reprend le travail deux semaines plus tard. Il assume graduellement de plus en plus de responsabilités, tout en consultant son psychologue à quelques reprises.

Il y a beaucoup d'autres scénarios, comme l'employé qui assume de nouvelles fonctions auprès du même employeur ou qui quitte pour une autre entreprise. Le congé pour récupérer est aussi un congé pour réfléchir – c'est une excellente occasion pour l'employé de réfléchir à son rôle au travail, à ses forces et à son cheminement de carrière.

En tant que professionnels, notre rôle consiste entre autres à favoriser le retour à la santé de l'employé et à l'inviter à étudier toutes les possibilités qui s'offrent à lui lors de son retour sur le marché du travail. ■

BIOGRAPHIE DE L'AUTEURE

La Dre Marie-Helene Pelletier est psychologue praticienne et haute dirigeante d'expérience. Elle est bilingue et possède la combinaison rare d'un doctorat et d'une maîtrise en administration des affaires. Par sa pratique individuelle, ses conseils en matière de santé mentale au travail et ses conférences sur la résilience, elle aide les particuliers et les entreprises à améliorer leur santé et leur rendement. Entrez en contact avec Marie-Hélène à l'adresse drmhpelletier.com, sur LinkedIn et sur Twitter.

How Mental Health First Aid works and why it's needed

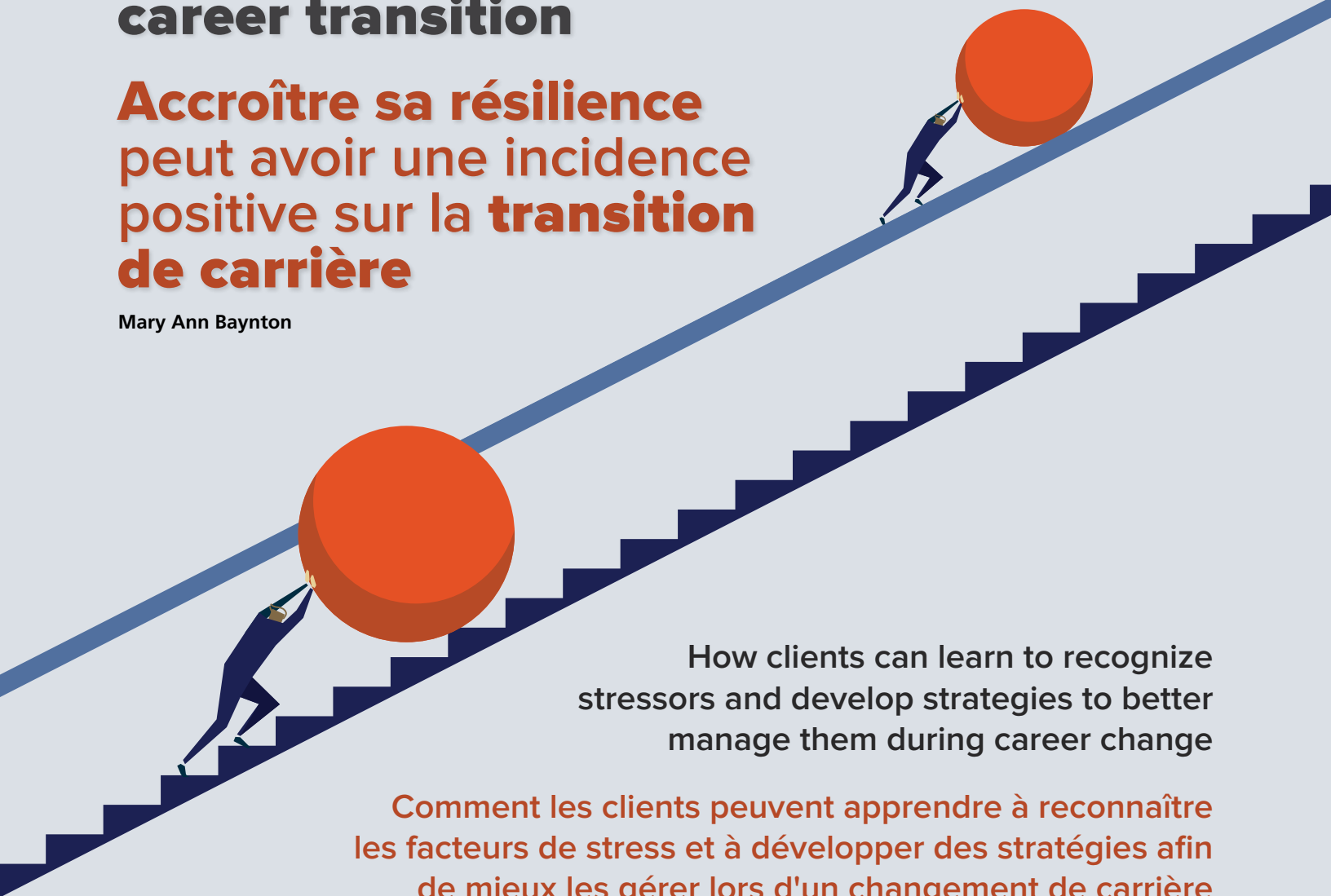
Mental Health First Aid is an interactive training program that teaches participants to recognize the signs that a person may be developing a mental-health problem or experiencing a mental-health crisis. It helps participants build mental-health literacy, decreases stigmatizing attitudes, and helps individuals identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illness.

In this online exclusive article by Stephen James Landry, found at ceric.ca/careering, read more about what you can learn in a Mental Health First Aid course and why it might be useful for you.

Building resilience can have a positive impact on career transition

Accroître sa résilience peut avoir une incidence positive sur la transition de carrière

Mary Ann Baynton



How clients can learn to recognize stressors and develop strategies to better manage them during career change

Comment les clients peuvent apprendre à reconnaître les facteurs de stress et à développer des stratégies afin de mieux les gérer lors d'un changement de carrière

Any transition in life can be stressful. Career transition in particular often happens at the same time as other life stressors, including personal, family, health or financial concerns. Recognizing our current reactions to stress and choosing healthier, more effective responses is what building resilience is all about.

Resilience is the capacity to adapt or recover from stressful situations, including a transition into the workforce or from one job to another. Building resilience doesn't mean you'll avoid stress. What it means is that you'll be able to cope better and recover from stress more effectively.

Research has helped us understand practical strategies to build resilience.

Toute transition dans la vie peut être source de stress. La transition de carrière en particulier survient souvent au même moment que d'autres sources de stress, comme les problèmes personnels, familiaux, financiers ou de santé. Accroître notre résilience consiste à connaître nos réactions actuelles au stress et à choisir des façons plus saines et plus efficaces d'y réagir.

La résilience est la capacité de s'adapter à une situation de stress ou d'en récupérer, comme l'entrée sur le marché du travail ou la transition d'un emploi à l'autre. Accroître sa résilience ne veut pas dire éviter le stress. La résilience permet simplement de mieux composer avec le stress et de mieux en récupérer.

La recherche nous a permis de connaître des stratégies pratiques pour accroître la résilience.

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Identifying our stress responses

For most of us, stress is a daily occurrence and our responses to it are automatic. This means we don't choose or plan them. With that in mind, if we can identify some of our immediate responses to stress, we're more likely to recognize and address them before they create a major life or health concern.

Some automatic responses can be physical in nature – cold sores, hives, and sweating or stomach problems. Some may be behavioural responses such as reaching for a substance, sleep pattern changes, clumsiness, forgetfulness, impatience, overscheduling or overworking. Emotional responses may also be present and could include irritability, anger, frustration or emotional outbursts.

The point to keep in mind is that these are involuntary and may still occur, but the earlier we identify them as stress responses, the sooner we can identify the stressor and make changes.

The importance of giving and receiving social support

One of the changes that can be made is to either give or receive social support. Ironically, we can reduce stress in our lives by focusing on helping others as well as reaching out for support for ourselves.

If you feel you just don't have people in your life who you can count on, there are options. One is to offer to help others through volunteering, joining a club or just assisting someone in need. This could be someone at home, work or in the community. The more people you support, the more people who may also be there when you need help.

There are also many organizations and communities that exist across the country with the specific purpose of providing support to those in need. Just reach out! Don't wait until the stress is unmanageable before investigating what is available. Unsure where to start? Try a local government representative's office to ask about services in the community.

Developing healthier coping strategies

Another strategy to build resilience is to explore new ways of coping that can help you prevent, as well as manage, stress in the moment. Every person is unique. What reduces stress for one person may increase it for another. For example, some people may really enjoy interacting with animals to reduce stress, while others could be afraid or allergic.

Some of the approaches that can be taken to develop healthier coping strategies include mindfulness, practicing gratitude or deep breathing. Others find art, music or time in nature are most effective. Take time to notice what works for you, and then commit to doing it on a regular basis.

Examining your options and making good decisions

Even with an awareness of our automatic responses to stress, and the inclusion of healthy strategies to manage that stress, we may still

Déterminez vos réactions au stress

Le stress fait partie du quotidien de la plupart des gens et nous y réagissons de façon automatique. Ainsi, notre réaction au stress n'est ni choisie ni planifiée. Cela étant dit, en déterminant certaines de nos réactions immédiates au stress, nous serons plus en mesure de les reconnaître et de nous y attaquer avant qu'elles ne deviennent une source de problèmes de santé ou autres.

Certaines réactions automatiques sont physiques – feux sauvages, urticaire, transpiration ou problèmes d'estomac. D'autres sont comportementales : consommation de substances, changements aux habitudes de sommeil, maladresse, oublis, impatience, surcharge d'horaire ou excès de travail. Des réactions émotives peuvent aussi se manifester : irritabilité, colère, frustration ou excès émotifs.

Il faut se rappeler que ses réactions sont involontaires et peuvent survenir quand même. Cependant, plus vite on détermine qu'elles sont causées par le stress, plus vite on peut cerner le facteur de stress et apporter des changements.

L'importance de donner et de recevoir du soutien social

Pour changer les choses, on peut notamment donner ou recevoir du soutien social. Ironiquement, il est possible de vivre moins stressé en aidant les autres et en demandant de l'aide.

Si vous n'avez personne sur qui compter, d'autres solutions s'offrent à vous. Vous pouvez faire du bénévolat, devenir membre d'un club ou aider une personne dans le besoin. Il peut s'agir d'un proche, d'un collègue ou d'un voisin. Plus vous aidez un grand nombre de personnes, plus le nombre de personnes qui pourraient vous aider en retour sera élevé.

Il existe aussi de nombreux organismes et groupes partout au pays dont la mission est de venir en aide aux gens dans le besoin. Il suffit de tendre la main! N'attendez pas que le stress soit devenu impossible à gérer avant de chercher de l'aide. Vous ne savez pas où commencer? Consultez le bureau du représentant de votre administration locale pour connaître les services offerts dans votre collectivité.

Adoptez des stratégies de gestion du stress plus saines

Une autre façon d'accroître votre résilience consiste à explorer de nouveaux moyens de prévention et de gestion du stress. Chaque personne est unique. Ce qui réduit le stress chez une personne peut l'accroître chez une autre. Certaines personnes, par exemple, utilisent les animaux pour réduire leur stress, tandis que d'autres les craignent ou sont allergiques.

La pleine conscience, l'expression de la reconnaissance et la respiration profonde sont des approches à adopter pour gérer le stress de façon plus saine. Pour certaines personnes, l'art, la musique ou le temps passé dans la nature sont efficaces. Prenez le temps de découvrir ce qui fonctionne pour vous, puis engagez-vous à le faire régulièrement.

Étudiez vos options et prenez de bonnes décisions

Même en étant conscient de nos réactions automatiques au stress et en utilisant des stratégies saines pour gérer ce stress, il est quand



become overwhelmed at different points in our life. At a time like this, it could be helpful to step back and consider additional ways to address our stress.

One strategy is to use the four A's:

- **Accept** the things and people you really cannot change. As hard as it may be, accepting what's not possible to change (rather than desperately or hopelessly wishing it were different) can allow you to manage your stress more effectively.
- **Avoid** unnecessary stress. Not all stress can be avoided. It may even be unhealthy to not deal with stressful situations that need to be resolved. However, when appropriate, try to avoid unnecessary stress by learning how to say no, limiting time with people who may foster a stress environment for you, and prioritizing your to-do list with an eye to eliminate tasks or activities that aren't truly necessary.
- **Alter** ways you can communicate and operate in your daily life to minimize stressors. You can do this by expressing your feelings to people you consider safe, being open to compromises that help reduce stress, and being open and honest about your needs in ways that others can understand and support.
- **Adapt** to the stressor by changing your attitudes and behaviours. Reframe problems with a more positive and solution-focused perspective, consider the consequences of taking specific actions, and set reasonable and clear expectations for yourself and others.

Looking at each of the four A's in relation to a stressor will help you think about it from a variety of perspectives. Then, you can choose the response you feel will work best for you.

When considering these strategies as part of a career-transition process, it's important to anticipate and understand that potential work stressors will arise. These stressors could include: a new learning curve, fear of failure or success, a new organizational culture, different ways of interacting with people and an environment and building new relationships.

It may seem counterproductive to think about all the things that could go wrong, but considering potential stressors and healthier responses in advance can help reduce the actual burden, should they occur as you begin your new job.

Make building resilience part of your lifelong learning

As we've seen, there are many practical strategies that can be put in place to help build resilience. Building resilience includes: becoming aware of our automatic stress responses, improving our ability to give and receive social support, adopting healthy coping strategies and lifestyle choices, stepping back to have an objective perspective about what's possible in addressing stressors and conscious awareness of the stressors that could happen as well as how you'll deal with them.

Some of us may have more of these skills than others right now, but they can be learned by anyone. Building resilience can, and should, become part of lifelong learning, as our lives are constantly in a state of transition. ■

même possible d'être dépassé par les événements à divers moments. Lorsque cela se produit, il faut prendre du recul pour trouver d'autres moyens de gérer le stress.

Une stratégie consiste en ces quatre techniques :

- **Accepter** les choses et les gens que vous ne pouvez pas changer. Même si c'est difficile, accepter ce que vous ne pouvez pas changer (plutôt que de souhaiter désespérément que la situation soit différente) peut vous aider à mieux gérer votre stress.
- **Éviter** tout stress inutile. Le stress ne peut pas toujours être évité. Il est même malsain d'éviter une situation stressante qui doit être résolue. Cependant, si c'est possible, évitez tout stress inutile en apprenant à dire non, en limitant le temps passé avec des personnes qui vous causent du stress et en éliminant les tâches ou activités inutiles.
- **Modifier** vos façons de communiquer et d'agir au quotidien pour réduire les facteurs de stress. Pour ce faire, confiez-vous aux personnes que vous considérez comme dignes de confiance, soyez ouverts aux compromis qui réduisent le stress et parlez ouvertement et honnêtement de vos besoins pour que les autres puissent vous comprendre et vous aider.
- **S'adapter** au facteur de stress en changeant vos attitudes et vos comportements. Repensez les problèmes en adoptant une perspective positive et axée sur les solutions, envisagez les conséquences d'actions précises et fixez des attentes claires et raisonnables pour vous et les autres.

Utilisez chacune de ces quatre techniques afin de voir le facteur de stress de plusieurs façons. Ensuite, choisissez la réaction qui vous convient le mieux.

Si on prend ces stratégies dans le contexte d'un processus de transition de carrière, il faut comprendre qu'il pourrait y avoir des facteurs de stress au travail. Au nombre de ces facteurs, il y a une nouvelle courbe d'apprentissage, la peur de l'échec ou du succès, une nouvelle culture organisationnelle, les diverses façons d'interagir avec les gens et le milieu, et la création de nouvelles relations.

Il peut paraître contreproductif de penser à tout ce qui pourrait mal tourner, mais envisager les facteurs de stress potentiels et trouver de meilleures façons d'y réagir permet de réduire le fardeau si ces facteurs surviennent une fois que vous avez commencé votre nouvel emploi.

Ne cessez jamais d'accroître votre résilience

Comme nous avons pu le voir, un grand nombre de stratégies pratiques peuvent servir à accroître la résilience. Pour accroître notre résilience, il faut prendre conscience de nos réactions automatiques au stress, améliorer notre capacité de donner et de recevoir du soutien social, adopter de bonnes stratégies de gestion du stress et un mode de vie plus sain, prendre du recul de manière à voir objectivement les possibilités qui s'offrent à nous pour composer avec le stress et être conscients des facteurs de stress possibles et des moyens d'y remédier.

Certains d'entre nous sont déjà mieux outillés que d'autres, mais tout le monde peut faire l'acquisition de ces compétences. On ne devrait jamais cesser d'accroître sa résilience, car nos vies évoluent constamment. ■



Free resources that can help you develop a personal plan for resilience and deal with specific workplace stressors are available at: workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com

Des ressources gratuites pouvant vous aider à élaborer un plan personnel de résilience et à gérer des facteurs de stress spécifiques sont disponibles à l'adresse suivante: strategiesdesantementale.com

AUTHOR BIO

Mary Ann Baynton proudly serves as the Program Director for the Great-West Life Centre for Mental Health in the Workplace, which develops and provides free tools and resources for anyone who wishes to prevent, manage or improve psychological health and safety at work. She is the author of several books including *Mindful Manager*, *Keeping Well at Work*, *Preventing Workplace Meltdown*, *Resolving Workplace Issues* and *The Evolution of Workplace Mental Health in Canada*.

BIOGRAPHIE DE L'AUTEURE

Mary Ann Baynton est directrice de programme pour le Centre pour la santé mentale en milieu de travail de la Great-West qui crée et fournit des ressources et outils gratuits à toute personne désirant gérer ou améliorer la santé et la sécurité psychologiques au travail ou prévenir les problèmes. Elle est l'auteure de plusieurs ouvrages, dont *Mindful Manager*, *Keeping Well at Work*, *Preventing Workplace Meltdown*, *Resolving Workplace Issues* et *The Evolution of Workplace Mental Health in Canada*.

Self-care can combat burnout for career development practitioners

Many career development professionals (CDPs) are drawn into their line of work due to their desire to help others. However, helping professionals often have a tendency to put others' needs ahead of their own, putting them at risk of experiencing mental-health issues such as compassion fatigue or burnout. If these issues are left unchecked, CDPs risk doing harm to clients instead of helping them.

However, exploring and implementing ways to increase resilience, and becoming more proactive in looking after oneself, will lessen the mental-health risks of working in a helping profession. Career development practitioners can build resilience by creating a workable and adaptable self-care plan that is designed for the specific helper.

Learn how to identify burnout and compassion fatigue, as well as how to create a self-care plan to build resilience, in the full article by Dr Michael Sorsdahl at ceric.ca/careering.

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CASE STUDY

In this recurring *Careering* feature, a career professional shares their real-life solution to a common problem in the field.



Building confidence to tackle a mid-life career transition

Teresa Francis

Identifying skills and successes to help illuminate a new, meaningful career path

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Change has been a recurring theme in my own career journey, so it is perhaps fitting that adult career transition became a focus of my work. Successful navigation of this significant event often requires revisiting personal identity as clients learn to see themselves in new ways. This case study tells the story of Stefan, a stage actor seeking career change. For Stefan, reflecting on the career he was leaving was an important step in preparing to reframe his skill set and open himself to new opportunities.

Stefan's story

"I'm desperate," Stefan said as he walked through the door. The look in his eyes confirmed his words. "I need to leave my career," he stated, his voice thick with emotion, "and I have no idea what else I can do."

Stefan was a stage actor with an extensive portfolio. For 30 years, he had performed in, produced and directed shows across the country.

As he shared a little of his story with me, I realized who he was – a well-known and well-loved personality in local theatre. I noticed my own resistance to his desire for a career change. "What a loss that would be," I thought.

Stefan loved his work and had given it his all. But the theatre world was changing, and he no longer felt a part of it. Although acting had defined him, the years of performing had taken a toll. He was exhausted, disillusioned and sad. He was also terrified, feeling as though he'd lost his identity, and wondering, as a 55-year-old man, what he had to offer.

Stefan didn't know what skills he possessed or how he might apply them in another field of work, but he did express a desire for a job with greater stability and more structure – something 9 to 5ish. He wasn't ready to (or in a position to) retire and felt that he had more to give; he just didn't know what that was.



Developing a career narrative

As we began our work together, we explored Stefan's background. His acting CV was extensive and he had directed more than 50 shows. He had led a theatre company, with responsibility for programming, scheduling, hiring and budgeting as well as for building and maintaining community relationships.

Reflecting on his experiences through writing a career narrative was therapeutic for Stefan. This career change was his decision, but he felt a great sense of loss at leaving his life's work. Revisiting performances, productions, accolades and challenges helped Stefan to acknowledge the achievements and contributions of his career. It allowed him to appreciate and honour where he'd been. At the same time, "it also confirmed that I was ready to move on."

Stefan's career narrative served another important purpose: It provided a jumping off point for conversations about Stefan's career highs and lows, his proudest moments, problems he solved and experiences he might not have otherwise mentioned. For example, for many years he had volunteered as the producer of a local high school musical, working with students, staff, parents, administrators and the public. Because this role was voluntary, he hadn't considered it a source of demonstrated skills.

From these conversations and other exercises he completed, we began to identify Stefan's transferable skills (easy!) and name them (more challenging!). Gradually, Stefan began to own them (very challenging!). He recognized himself as an actor, director and producer, but did he believe he had leadership skills? As he worked to find terms to describe his abilities to potential new employers, Stefan periodically stepped away to reflect, integrating this new perspective into his view of himself.

New awareness, new opportunities

When Stefan began to craft a new resume around his skills, I saw a change in him. He had a new awareness of his strengths in managing people and resources, his strong work ethic and his commitment to excellence.

As his confidence grew, an interest in a career in arts administration emerged. Stefan tested out his ideas with trusted colleagues and friends, and the positive feedback he received encouraged him.

What happened next illustrates key points of one of my favourite career development theories: John Krumboltz's Planned Happenstance. Krumboltz's theory encourages us to remain open-minded in our planning and preparations, ready to embrace opportunity when it presents itself. Stefan had identified a number of steps toward his new career goal, including further education (he felt his lack of a completed degree was a barrier). As an interim step, he applied for a temporary, part-time role with a local arts organization. He sent off his new resume and got an email back: "Did you know we are looking for an Executive Director?" The rest, as they say, is history.

Several years later, Stefan inhabits his role with confidence, enthusiasm and grace. In many ways, he seems like a different person from the one I first met. In a simple statement, he sums up what the career development process meant to him: Without it, "I could not have seen myself in that way."

Working with Stefan brought me valuable insights. Among them:

1. No matter how successful we are, career change can be terrifying. Any of us can lose confidence, regardless of how skilled others tell us we are.
2. Transition takes time and may be different for each of us. Naming our skills is only half the battle – integrating them into how we see ourselves can take much longer.
3. Even when we have moved on, the journey isn't over. Stefan's transition continued as he accepted, began and learned his new role.
4. Seizing the moment takes courage. Stefan wasn't at all certain that he was ready to be an E.D. when the opportunity presented itself, but a new-found courage and belief in himself helped him make the leap. ■

AUTHOR BIO

Teresa Francis, MEd, CCC, RCT, is a career counsellor and a consultant in Career Development and Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR). She draws upon tools and strategies from both areas in the services she offers through her company, Teresa Francis Consulting.

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CLIENT SIDE

In this new *Careering* feature, a jobseeker will reflect on successes and struggles in their career development.



How my disability changed my perspective on jobseeking

After she was diagnosed with a progressive condition, Rebecca McMurrer feared the time and effort she had put into building a nursing career would go to waste

Jobseeking can be difficult in the best of circumstances. Browsing through postings, hoping to see a position that will not only meet your financial needs but also allow you to build a long and meaningful career, can be frustrating. When living with a disability, you share the same insecurities as other jobseekers, but you are also flooded with emotion and concerns, wondering if your limitations (perceived or otherwise) will eliminate you from even being considered.

Our society strives to uphold the belief that a person's disability should not be seen as a detriment when they are being considered for a job. Over the years, we have made great leaps forward to legislate and regulate the hiring of individuals who require special assistance. However, individuals with special needs continue to be looked upon as

a burden in many workplaces. The negative self-view some job seekers with disabilities hold can also be harmful and, in turn, impede their success and hurt their overall mental health.

My name is Rebecca McMurrer, and I live with a condition called spastic paraparesis as well as cerebral palsy. I have been trained in and worked as a human services worker, pharmacy technician and most recently became a licensed practical nurse specializing in Alzheimer and dementia care. I live in Saint John, NB, work for a non-profit organization and volunteer with a local nursing home in their Dementia Care unit. I have a passion for caregiving and educating others on various health topics as well as advocating for those who do not have a voice.

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“Individuals with special needs continue to be looked upon as a burden in many workplaces. The negative self-view some job seekers with disabilities hold can also be harmful and, in turn, impede their success and hurt their overall mental health.”

Finding a job was never very difficult for me. I had a great resume and a lot of experience and education. This all changed after I was diagnosed with a progressive condition and my mobility began to deteriorate. I still had the same qualifications and experience, but now I felt burdened with a label and new restrictions. I was a nurse, but now a nurse with a disability. This newly attached addendum to my life felt like an apology with a “but” attached to it. I felt my skills and experience would mean less and by that I would mean less as a person in the health-care field. How could I compete with those who had the same qualifications and knowledge, but were able to stand for hours on end, when I could not?

Being a nurse is an extremely physical job, but it was my passion. I was left struggling to reassure myself that I was still viable in my chosen field and that not only could I continue and flourish in my current vocation, but also that all the time, effort and study I had put into my career was not without merit. I began to feel as though my life (which was tethered to my career in many facets) was now as limited as I had begun to feel physically. My mental and physical health began to suffer as I pushed myself more and more to show not only those I worked with, but also myself, that I could still be a viable member of a care team. I pushed myself so hard, in fact, that I now require crutches and, in many instances, a wheelchair to complete even the simplest of tasks that I once took for granted. I began to feel more isolated and ineffectual as time passed.

I reached out to a friend to talk about my situation. He told me about an organization called the Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work (CCRW), and how they not only assisted him with finding a meaningful and appropriate career, but even more importantly, reminded him of his worth as a productive member of society. I took his advice to reach out and, after only three months, I found a position that suited my needs and accommodations, and also allowed me to support a population of people – often neglected and underserved – living with Alzheimer’s and dementia.

Organizations like the CCRW not only assist people with finding work and stability, they also perform the crucial role of educating the public on the importance of inclusion. They raise awareness of why people with special needs must be not just visible members of society, but viable members of society. It was once common to exclude people with disabilities from the workplace, but they are now encouraged to bring their skills and experience into the working world. Although they may need to complete a task in a different manner than their co-workers, they can deliver the same results.

Advocacy organizations help people who may have lost their drive, or even their ability to feel productive and of worth, to see themselves as equal to their peers. This is no small task, as physical ailments can create or exacerbate mental ailments if a person is feeling undervalued at work. Much work is still to be done, but with the increasing number of inclusive employers and organizations such as the CCRW working together, we are now making what was once impossible, possible. ■

AUTHOR BIO

Rebecca McMurrer is 26 years old and lives in Saint John, NB. In her spare time she enjoys volunteering at her church, exploring New Brunswick’s beaches and spending time with her partner, their Boston terrier and their cat.

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The Status of Senior Entrepreneurship in Canada: A Snapshot ceric.ca/seniorpreneur
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CAREER BRIEFS



Canada should improve labour-market outcomes for immigrants, women: report

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The Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) released its Economic Survey of Canada 2018 report in July. The OECD found that Canada's economy has returned to buoyant growth with the help of stimulus measures following the weak patch caused by the 2014 energy price slump. However, the report stated that Canada's labour productivity was below the OECD average. It also asserted that Canada's aging population and weak productivity growth will present long-term challenges.

The report highlighted that Canada's gender employment gap, which is considerably larger than the OECD average, has not shrunk since 2009. The report stated that the effects of population aging could be mitigated by improving labour-market outcomes for women, youth and seniors.

While the report commended Canada for its successful immigration policies, it also noted that labour-market integration challenges persist. When compared with Canadian-born workers within comparable education, age and geographical brackets, immigrants earn considerably less. The OECD urged Canada to improve integration measures and to select immigrants with higher earnings prospects to reduce the wage gap.



Read the Economic Survey at oecd.org - Economic Surveys.

George Brown College launches new career development program

George Brown College, located in downtown Toronto, launched its Career Development Practitioner program this fall. The year-long (three-semester) program is shorter than the diploma program it replaced. Graduates of the program, which the College says is more practical and responds to employer demands for trained workers, will earn an Ontario College Graduate Certificate. The program maintains a generalist perspective, with such courses as Trends in Career Development, Professional Practice, and Individual Counselling and Coaching. Part-time and online learning options are available.

The program includes an experiential learning component in the third semester, which will see students attend a placement several times a week with the support of an advisor. Placements are chosen by students and approved by the program co-ordinator. Students can choose to work in a variety of settings, from community-based organizations to the private sector, vocational rehabilitation programs and government departments. The practicum component allows graduates to partly fulfil the work experience hours required by the Career Development Practitioners' Certification Board of Ontario. As well, the program's ethics courses are designed to meet the Certified Career Development Practitioner certification.



Visit georgebrown.ca/programs to learn more about the Career Development Practitioner program.



Filling the research gap on 'seniorpreneurs'

A CERIC-funded study conducted by the Sheridan Centre for Elder Research investigated the experiences, needs and interests of senior entrepreneurs (or "seniorpreneurs"). The eight-month study collected feedback from 180 senior entrepreneurs through online surveys, in-depth interviews and focus groups.

There has been relatively little research, or even interest, in investigating the characteristics of older entrepreneurs in Canada. This research fills an information gap by providing Canadian data about the needs and interests of seniorpreneurs, the results of which can be used by career counsellors to coach and guide older clients. Among the findings:

- Nearly four in 10 older entrepreneurs face gaps in the support they need to launch or develop their businesses
- 37% of the respondents aged 50+ had challenges in accessing financial or government support and mentors
- The top reason identified by respondents to start a business after 50 was interest in continuing to use their skills

The report offers recommendations to enhance the state of senior entrepreneurship in Canada, including: providing support for all entrepreneurs regardless of age; standardizing programs and services available to support this senior cohort; and providing career-transition services for older workers who are leaving traditional jobs.



Access the final report at ceric.ca/seniorpreneur.

Playbook provides comprehensive career-management tool for non-profits

CERIC is publishing a non-profit edition of its popular *Retain and Gain Playbook* this fall that addresses the challenges faced by charities and non-profits in attracting, retaining and engaging staff. This bilingual publication, authored by Lisa Taylor of Challenge Factory, will enhance capacity building across the non-profit sector. The *Retain and Gain: Career Management for Non-Profits and Charities Playbook* addresses the unique environment in which non-profits operate, in terms of funding mechanisms, community stakeholders and reliance on volunteers.

Written in an innovative "travel guide" format, the *Playbook* is intended for executive directors and people managers to use as a practical career management tool with their employees in charities of all sizes. It features strategies to engage full-time and part-time staff in ways that advance, develop and support thriving careers within the sector. This includes more than 40 practical, low-cost tips, activities and actions that can be implemented in as few as 10 minutes a day.

You can download the *Playbook* free, or it will also be sold in hard copy as well as ebook formats.



Download the Non-Profit Retain and Gain Playbook or learn how to buy a copy at ceric.ca/nonprofit.

Many students lacking paid work experience in their field: poll

A survey of 1,000 Canadian adults, 18 to 29, from the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) revealed that while students believe in the value of experiential learning, they are often unable to find paid work placements. The survey found nearly half of current students have not done paid work related to their field of study or through their academic program. However, the poll also found students believe paid work placements related to their field of study are the best type of experience to help new graduates get a good job. More than half (57%) of current students reported having participated in an unpaid work placement.

CASA recommendations for the federal government include:

- Expanding the Canada Summer Jobs program to reach 10,000 additional students
- Investing in programs that connect Indigenous and marginalized youth with employers and the labour market
- Increasing youth access to career education
- Increasing access to apprenticeships, as well as vocational education and training
- Developing a well-co-ordinated and highly visible school-to-work transition strategy



Access the survey at casa-acae.com.



Excitement building for Cannexus19

Planning is well underway for Cannexus19, taking place Jan. 28-30, 2019 in Ottawa. This bilingual conference is Canada's largest for career counsellors, career development professionals and the career services sector. The Cannexus19 National Career Development Conference will feature more than 130 education sessions. Topics include:

- Effective counselling & facilitation techniques
- Labour market information
- Career assessment tools
- Post-secondary & graduate employment

Deborah Saucier, Right Hon David Johnston and Mary McMahon will present keynote addresses. Cannexus will also feature a Mega Panel on Theories and Models at Work – Ideas for Practice.

Cannexus19 is expected to bring together 1,000 career development professionals from education, government, community and private sectors. The conference is designed to promote the exchange of information and explore innovative approaches in the areas of career counselling and career development.

Register for Cannexus19 by Nov. 7, 2018 to get the Early Bird rate, a savings of \$75 on the three-day rate. ■



Learn more about Cannexus19 and register at cannexus.ca.

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Myths and misconceptions about hiring people with disabilities



Only a few people with disabilities are in the labour market

There are **443,900** people with disabilities **ready and able** to work but who are **unable to find employment**, and **almost half** of them have a **post-secondary education**.



If you are not accessing this talent pool, **your competition is!**



Hiring people with disabilities will increase safety incidents and insurance premiums

Employees with disabilities have a

40% lower safety incident rate



and

78% lower overall costs associated with accidents.



Safety insurance premiums are based on your **safety record** and the **type and size** of your business.



Most people with disabilities use wheelchairs

While the **wheelchair icon** has prompted this belief, they are only used by **6%** of people with disabilities



that's about **1%** of the general population.



It's expensive to accommodate people with disabilities

According to the **2016 Partnership Council Report on Employment and Disability**, the average cost of accommodating people with disabilities is just

\$500



60%

of employers spend **nothing at all**.



Retaining an employee with a disability will require a long-term financial investment

Studies show that people with disabilities have **lower absenteeism** and **stay with employers longer** than their non-disabled counterparts. The potential costs of accommodation are **significantly outweighed** by the **savings incurred** by **long-term employees**.



Information courtesy of The Discover Ability Network, an online portal and resource that connects Ontario businesses directly to people with disabilities. It includes a six-step guide, acts as a great resource for employers, and provides answers to questions employers may have when hiring and retaining employees with disabilities.



Well-being-based career practices and interventions for preventing and treating mental illness

Derrick McEachern

Career development practitioners should take a holistic approach, supporting their clients' mental health while helping them navigate career planning

Career planning is a mental-health intervention and a well-being practice. What people do each day shapes who they are and how they feel about their daily lives.

People who are disengaged from their work, unemployed, undergoing a work transition or ambivalent about their career path may struggle to varying degrees with stress, uncertainty, low self-worth, anxiety and, in many cases, depression. However, government programs traditionally focus solely on employment: helping people find work using their current skills or retraining them in specifically targeted fields with a high probability of employment.

Well-being and mental-health research (Walsh, 2011) suggest a more holistic approach is necessary. There is a need for more comprehensive services that account for employees' lifestyle factors and support employee engagement and retention while also addressing mental-health problems.

Well-being and mental health

In their book *Wellbeing: The Five Essential Elements*, Tom Rath and Jim Harter document research conducted across 155 countries that suggests five interconnected elements are predictive of overall well-being.

- **Career well-being:** liking and finding purpose in what we do each day
- **Social well-being:** having positive, supportive relationships
- **Physical well-being:** having good physical health and energy
- **Financial well-being:** having financial stability and security
- **Community well-being:** taking pride in, and contributing to, our communities

Well-being goes beyond happiness. According to Gallup, people with high well-being in these five areas have the resources to meet and manage the challenges of everyday life.



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Research from other organizations including the World Health Organization (WHO, 2018), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, no date) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2016) emphasizes the importance of comprehensive and holistic approaches to improving individual and community well-being.

Although Canadians in general score high in well-being, some worrying trends have been identified by the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (Canadian Index of Wellbeing, 2016). Since 2008, Canadians on average are spending:

- 1/3 less time on vacation
- 16% less time volunteering
- 30% less time with friends
- 15% less money on culture and recreation

In his book *Lost Connections*, Johann Hari documents research from social scientists around the world challenging the prevailing wisdom that depression and anxiety are the result of chemical imbalances in the brain. This research provides a new window into the rise and prevalence of mental illness as a result of disconnections in people's lives from:

- meaningful work
- other people
- meaningful values
- childhood trauma
- status and respect
- the natural world
- a hopeful and secure future

Such research may begin to explain the prevalence of mental-health issues – one in five Canadians in any given year experiences a mental-health or addiction problem (Centre for Addiction and Mental Health). It also supports a more comprehensive approach to understanding, preventing and treating mental illness.



The relationship between well-being, mental health and career development

Career service providers work at the cross-section of where work, well-being and mental health meet. Therefore, they should be skilled at recognizing and supporting client well-being and mental health while helping clients navigate the career-planning and employment process.

The following example illustrates this complexity:

Toniesha is 28 years old and has been working full-time at a grocery store for the past eight years. She is currently going through a divorce and is struggling financially. She has two children ages 4 and 7. Concerned she cannot provide for her children's needs on her current income, she is considering moving to a small apartment in a more affordable but less safe community. With only a high-school education, she fears finding more reliable work with a significantly better income isn't promising. She says, "I know it's the middle of August, but I am thinking about going back to school and I'm looking for help. I can't afford to make a colossal mistake."

Given Toniesha's personal and financial situation, the pressure she is under, and the short timeline she has to make a decision, choosing an unsuitable career path is a real risk.

The above case is not a unique one faced by guidance counsellors, post-secondary counsellors, employment advisors and other career practitioners. Companies and organizations also encounter employees like Toniesha who are suffering, disconnected, unable to make ends meet financially, or longing for more meaning in their life or work.

Career well-being as a mental-health practice

Career well-being occurs when a person's life and work are aligned with their mental-health needs. They like what they do, are highly engaged in their work, have a feeling they belong and are making contributions through their work.

Reversing our trends in mental health and increasing individual well-being require greater understanding of what makes people thrive, as well as the causes of mental illness. It requires greater compassion and a more holistic approach in government-funded programs, companies and organizations, schools, colleges and universities. We all have a part to play in facilitating career planning, employee well-being and improved mental health.

Government-funded programs could:

- Provide well-being-based career-exploration and planning services for employees in low-paying jobs with little long-term security to retrain and advance their careers
- Ensure people who are unemployed have access to career counsellors and practitioners who are trained in well-being-informed career services and interventions as an integral part of the career development process

Employers could:

- Implement employee success planning that incorporates well-being and career planning into their annual reviews
- Ensure access to employee assistance program (EAP) services that offer well-being-based career counselling, interventions and planning

Schools, colleges and universities could:

- Provide well-being-based career planning for high-school students to help them envision and identify their career and well-being needs
- Provide comprehensive career-development services for prospective students, helping them make informed, well-being-based life and work decisions
- Train counsellors and advisors in assessing and improving student well-being by identifying areas of disconnection as risk factors for mental illness

Career counsellors could:

- Include assessment of five interconnected elements of well-being as a central part of career counselling services
- Incorporate well-being-based career interventions that support behavioural and lifestyle changes to sustain long-term well-being and mental health

Preventing mental-health problems and supporting people who are living with them requires institutions and individuals to take a more proactive and compassionate approach.

It is important that we remember that employment isn't enough. Organizations need healthy, productive, engaged employees. People need work and lives where they can make meaningful contributions and have a hopeful, secure future.

Well-being-based workplace practices and career interventions can improve mental health, sustainable employment, an organization's productivity and, ultimately, the economy. ■

AUTHOR BIO

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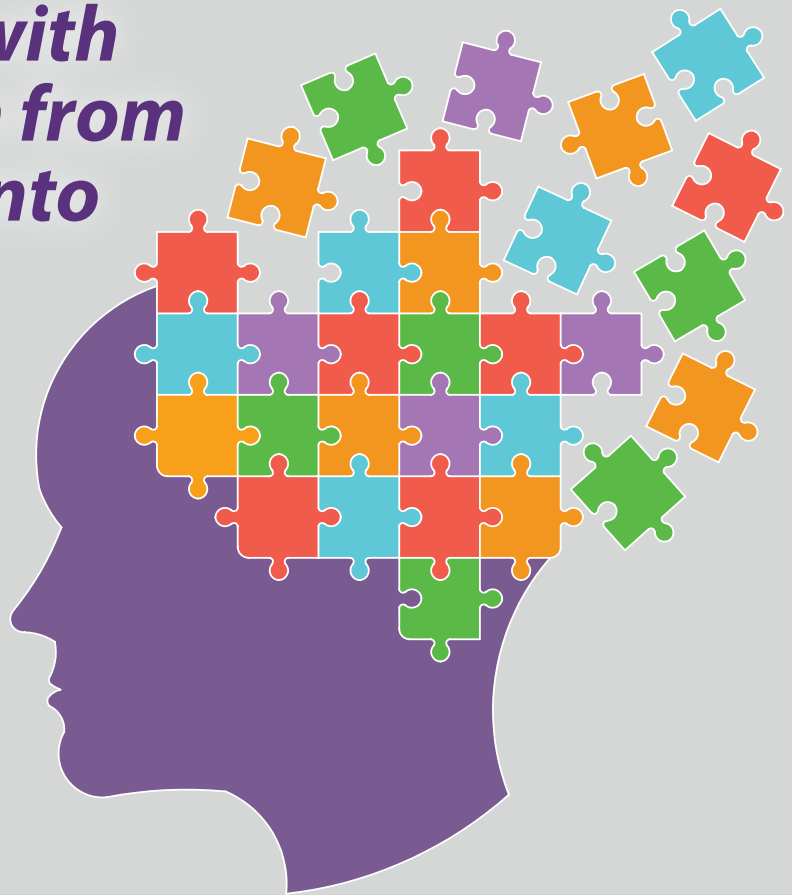
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Assisting adults with autism transition from post-secondary into the workplace

Sarah Taylor and Dr Anna-Lisa Ciccocioppo

Many people who live on the autism spectrum are under - or unemployed, but with some support, this differently talented group can offer a lot to the workforce



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Autism Spectrum Disorder is commonly thought of as a childhood condition but in fact, ASD is a life-long neurological difference. Children will rarely lose the diagnosis as they get older, and an increasing number of individuals are being diagnosed as adults. Statistics from the U.S.-based Center for Disease Control in 2016 indicate that as many as one in 68 children were diagnosed, and statistical trends across various sources suggest that the number of individuals identified on the spectrum is growing considerably.

What is autism?

The diagnostic criteria according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) include persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction across multiple contexts, as manifested by deficits in social-emotional reciprocity, non-verbal communicative behaviours used for social interaction, and in developing, maintaining and understanding relationships. Autism is a spectrum disorder, meaning that there is a wide degree of variation in the way it affects people, but they have a shared core of traits. The level of (dis)ability and the combination of traits varies tremendously from person to person. In fact, two people with the same diagnosis may have very different behaviours, abilities and life outcomes.

Providing support in post-secondary

Although the specific reasons for the increase in the prevalence of autism are unclear, it is incumbent on post-secondary institutions

and the world of employment to learn ways to better engage and support this different but valuable talent pool. The 78% increase in the number of children diagnosed with autism between 2002-2008 (Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring Network, 2012) is now being observed by post-secondary accessibility staff. Many of those students are now entering higher education and require some level of accommodation to be academically successful.

Some students on the spectrum will register with accessibility services at the urging of their parents at the onset of their program, whether they engage with the services or not. Others do not contact accessibility services until they are in graduate school, where there is less structure and a greater need to interact with professors (especially their research supervisor). While some will engage proactively, others wait until they are in crisis and unsure of where else to turn for support, and yet others may be directed to accessibility services following an incident of non-academic misconduct, or conflict with an instructor or supervisor.

Characteristics of autism

- Abnormalities of mood
- Uneven profile of skill development
- Strong preference for routine
- Unusual fears or anxieties

As these examples suggest, students on the autism spectrum may have difficulty coping with the post-secondary environment, which may cause them to drift from one field of study to another, leading to frustration, anxiety, depression and dropping out (Dipeolu, Storlie, & Johnson, 2015). As such, these students can experience greater challenges in general with career planning and the school-to-work transition.



Barriers to entering the workforce

Recent American statistics indicate that 85% of people living on the autism spectrum are unemployed or underemployed. The study also found that only half (53%) of young adults with an ASD diagnosis had ever worked for pay outside the home in the first eight years following high school, representing the lowest employment rate among disability groups even when controlling for impairment severity, household income and social demographics (Howlin, 2013).

What are the workplace barriers that contribute to these concerning statistics? One issue is that autism is an invisible disability and people tend to be more compassionate and understanding about disabilities they can see. The increased emphasis on social versus technical skills, and finding the “right fit” for the team, in addition to the increased role of behavioural scenario questions in the interview process, can make it difficult for a prospective employee on the spectrum to present as a desirable candidate in an interview situation.

Once hired, there can be additional challenges with developing relationships and communicating effectively with colleagues. Individuals living on the autism spectrum can have difficulty understanding language with multiple meanings, including humour, sarcasm, synonyms, idioms and metaphors. The desire for fixed schedules and routine can mean that employees on the spectrum may seem inflexible with changing work expectations and environments.

In spite of these challenges, employees on the spectrum offer many strengths to the workplace. They are reliable, dedicated employees who offer strengths in attention to detail, concentration, long-term memory, special interests and tolerance for repetitive tasks. They are attentive listeners who will follow the outlined protocol carefully, focus intently on the task, and are less likely to gossip or be caught up in office politics.

Easing the transition

So, how can we best help young adults on the spectrum successfully transition from post-secondary studies into the workplace? Briel and Getzel (2014) identify a number of best practices:

- Provide information that is clear and precise – avoid using metaphors or jokes to communicate career-planning information.

- Provide experiential learning opportunities related to the job search. For example, train jobseekers through role play how to demonstrate interest in a position through their body language and active listening, and how to become comfortable with being asked open-ended questions in an interview.
- Assist with goal setting, problem-solving and decision-making. Help jobseekers address challenges such as disorganization, inability to multitask and literal-mindedness. Encourage them to look for a work environment where they can function well, rather than the “perfect” job.
- Aid with time management and stress management. Expose them to situations in which time management, sustained effort and delayed gratification can be demonstrated and learned through discussion and role play. Stress-management strategies such as regular exercise, listening to relaxing music and reframing negative thoughts can be helpful to jobseekers on the spectrum.
- Help prospective employees develop a disclosure plan or self-efficacy script to articulate functional limitations and areas of strength. Encourage students to thoroughly assess the situation during the interview process before deciding whether or not to disclose. Functional limitations can be the focus of disclosure, as the employer does not need to know a diagnosis.
- Assist students with transition planning and skill development as soon as possible to appropriately prepare high-school students for post-secondary life and beyond, with parental involvement (Dymond, Meadan, & Pickens, 2017).
- Help them understand accommodations they could request in the post-secondary and/or work environment (e.g., periodic breaks, alternatives to open cubicles, limited exposure to ringing phones and soft lighting) to reduce sensory overload (Dipeolu et al., 2015).

While there are challenges involved and resources required to support people who live on the autism spectrum to be successful in post-secondary studies and in the transition to employment, we reiterate that there are tremendous benefits to engaging this increasingly prominent and differently talented group of students and workers. ■

AUTHOR BIOS

Sarah Taylor began her career in autism treatment in 1996. Her many years of experience in assessment, consultation and advocacy help provide a framework for curriculum/project development and sensitivity training for employers.

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Améliorer l'efficacité au travail des employés ayant un problème de santé mentale ou un handicap

Sara Savoie

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Vous savez lire et pourtant vous mettez beaucoup plus de temps à le faire que d'autres personnes selon votre niveau de fatigue ou vos distractions du moment! Imaginez maintenant un individu ayant des problèmes d'humeur ou d'anxiété. Il sait lire, mais, si on lui enlève du temps et que l'on ne lui explique pas l'objectif de la lecture ou des échéanciers à respecter, l'efficacité ne sera pas au rendez-vous et la satisfaction de l'employeur se dégradera au fil du temps vers des remises en question quant aux compétences de l'employé. Comment peut-on contribuer à « l'efficacité » des personnes ayant un problème de santé mentale ou un handicap sur le marché du travail? Dans cet article, il sera question de l'importance de la compréhension des besoins de l'employé pour augmenter l'efficacité au travail, la visée des qualités recherchées par les employeurs et la valorisation de certaines stratégies pouvant y être rattachées pour améliorer les situations difficiles.

Certains employés ne « fonctionnent » pas comme les autres. Les collègues ou les employeurs ont presque toujours du mal à les comprendre et à se mettre à leur place pour pouvoir tolérer leurs comportements. Si certains milieux de travail sont plus enclins que d'autres à accorder des ressources et de l'aide pour les employés ayant des problèmes de santé mentale ou un handicap, d'autres ne se rendent

pas compte de l'intensité du trouble ou de l'impact de celui-ci sur l'efficacité au travail. Par les diverses consultations que j'ai eues à faire depuis les 10 dernières années, j'ai fait quelques observations qui peuvent paraître très simples mais qui demeurent incontournables pour faire une différence dans l'efficacité au travail.

La notion d'efficacité est relative le plus souvent aux attentes de l'employeur et à la capacité de l'employé à les atteindre. Un sentiment d'efficacité personnelle élevé peut contribuer à l'efficacité de l'individu au travail. Bandura (2003) fut parmi ceux qui ont travaillé le plus sur la notion du sentiment d'efficacité personnelle. Il existe des conditions qui peuvent construire ou modifier le sentiment d'efficacité. Plus un individu vivra un succès lors de l'expérimentation d'un comportement donné, plus il sera amené à croire en ses capacités personnelles pour accomplir le comportement exigé. L'état physiologique et les émotions jouent un rôle dans le sentiment d'efficacité, peu importe si nous avons ou non un problème de santé mentale ou un handicap. En fait, la personne atteinte d'un problème de santé mentale ou d'un handicap sera encore plus influencée par les conditions pouvant construire ou modifier le sentiment d'efficacité. Une émotion aversive, telle que l'anxiété, avec une faible performance du comportement désiré, peut l'amener à douter encore plus de ses compétences et ainsi conduire à une inefficacité plus grande.



L'employé qui a un trouble bipolaire dont la médication n'est pas régularisée sera plus vulnérable à des irrégularités d'humeur ou de concentration. Nous pourrions alors comparer la situation à un conducteur qui ne peut tolérer un endormissement au volant. S'il commence à ressentir de la fatigue alors qu'il conduit et qu'il ne fait pas de pause, il deviendra de plus en plus difficile de rester vigilant, même s'il est parfaitement motivé à ne pas sombrer dans le sommeil pour ne pas périr dans un accident. L'employé qui souffre d'un trouble bipolaire est dans cette même situation. Il est motivé à demeurer attentif et efficace, mais ses pensées peuvent l'envahir et les doutes qu'il a sur lui-même peuvent engendrer des comportements ou des réactions où l'efficacité au travail sera moindre. Il doit faire des efforts de plus en plus soutenus pour effectuer la tâche entreprise ou suivre les explications des collègues de travail et ne pas décrocher, mais ces efforts sont insuffisants. Ces efforts ne se voient pas et il leur est souvent reproché injustement de ne pas faire assez d'efforts pour se concentrer, alors même qu'ils en font beaucoup et qu'ils ne peuvent pas se concentrer davantage. Cette situation peut occasionner un manque d'organisation, des conflits avec les collègues ou l'employeur et un non-respect des échéanciers. Selon Grégoire (2018), la pression peut entraîner une perte de sens et d'énergie qui empêche de continuer à performer. Comprendre les difficultés vécues ou les besoins de l'employé concerné peut aider à rétablir la confiance de la personne envers son travail et éviter l'engrenage dans un cercle vicieux d'inefficacité.

En effet, les besoins de l'individu influencent significativement l'efficacité de celui-ci au travail. Un employé dyspraxique, donc un handicap réduisant la dextérité fine et les aptitudes motrices, doit sans cesse écrire avec une écriture qui ne s'automatise pas. Il doit fournir des efforts qui occasionnent des résultats irréguliers, car il n'est pas possible de fournir des efforts en permanence. Efforts qu'il fait aux dépens d'autres tâches. Si ce type d'employé n'a pas accès à des logiciels ou des outils informatiques pouvant l'aider au plan de l'écriture, il en verra son efficacité réduite malgré sa capacité à écouter, à réfléchir, à comprendre et à apprendre. Chaque employé a des besoins qui lui sont propres, mais les personnes ayant un problème de santé mentale ou un handicap ont des caractéristiques qui peuvent les amener à avoir plus de défis que la moyenne des gens s'ils ne sont pas pris en considération.

Un moyen qui peut aider l'employeur ou les conseillers d'orientation dans leurs interventions et l'accompagnement est de considérer les attentes de l'employé et de l'employeur, la concordance entre celles-ci et ce que l'on recherche comme qualités en milieu de travail. Rodgers (2010) offre un portrait complet de ces qualités qui encore aujourd'hui peuvent correspondre à des points de repères pour accéder à un niveau élevé d'efficacité et de satisfaction professionnelles :

- **La capacité d'adaptation** : L'employé est-il capable de se débrouiller lors d'un imprévu ou perd-il ses moyens?
- **La capacité d'apprendre** : Fait-il preuve d'ouverture et d'un rythme adéquat d'apprentissage ou se sent-il inconfortable avec la nouveauté?
- **L'initiative** : A-t-il besoin de quelqu'un d'autre pour passer à l'action ou se sent-il en confiance pour entreprendre la tâche par lui-même?
- **La maturité** : Est-il possible de se concentrer et de ne pas recommencer deux fois la même tâche ou est-ce que les difficultés personnelles prennent trop de place?
- **La polyvalence** : L'accomplissement de plusieurs tâches se fait-il par l'utilisation d'un agenda ou d'un aide-mémoire?
- **La capacité à travailler en équipe** : Établit-il ses objectifs de façon réaliste et réalisable et détermine-t-il les priorités en entente avec les autres employés?
- **L'intégrité** : S'accorde-t-il des pauses de 10 minutes quand cela est nécessaire?
- **L'intelligence émotionnelle** : A-t-il la capacité de reconnaître, de comprendre et de maîtriser ses propres émotions et de composer avec les émotions des autres personnes?
- **La capacité de communiquer** : A-t-il l'habitude de transmettre ses opinions ou ses recommandations de manière précise et honnête?
- **Le leadership** : Est-il possible de rester positif et détendu en exprimant ses pensées tout en encourageant la même attitude chez ses collègues?

Si une ou plusieurs de ces qualités ne semblent pas au rendez-vous il est possible de faire un bilan et un plan d'actions sur l'amélioration de celles-ci tout en tenant compte des besoins de l'individu. Pour améliorer et maintenir l'efficacité au travail, il est aussi primordial d'établir des conditions favorables et de promouvoir celles-ci : un espace de travail agréable et chaleureux, un bureau ou un poste de travail bien rangé, une organisation fonctionnelle et visuelle agréable, des relations interpersonnelles harmonieuses, des moyens de communication efficaces, etc.

En incitant et en encourageant les personnes ayant un problème de santé mentale ou un handicap à viser et à maintenir ces qualités et ces stratégies dans le cadre de leur emploi, les employeurs et les conseillers d'orientation ou en emploi peuvent contribuer à une plus grande efficacité au travail. Il est nécessaire de travailler les éléments un à la fois en ayant en tête les besoins, les forces et les défis de l'employé. ■

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Sara Savoie, conseillère en services adaptés - École nationale d'aérotechnique; conseillère d'orientation (M.Ed. 2003) & orthopédagogue (M.A. 2007) en pratique privée - Clinique Myriam Gagnon & Clinique Éducative Mon coffre à outils. Familiarisée avec le milieu scolaire et l'intégration sociale des étudiants en situation de handicap, Savoie désire mettre en application ses connaissances en participant à des projets concrets se rapportant à toute clientèle s'y apparentant. Elle est la co-auteure du livre « C'est décidé, je retourne aux études - Une histoire dont vous êtes le héros » lui ayant valu le Prix Orientation 2018 de l'Ordre des conseillers et conseillères d'orientation du Québec.

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Principles in Action

Uncovering interests to find the best career fit

Lisa Noonan



Photo courtesy of Lisa Noonan



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With a goal of bringing greater clarity and consistency to our national conversations about career development, CERIC developed a set of “**Guiding Principles of Career Development**” that have been enthusiastically embraced across Canada. These eight Guiding Principles are intended as a starting point to inform discussions with clients, employers, funders, policymakers and families.

Each issue of *Careering* features a Guiding Principle “in action,” exploring how a career professional is applying a principle in practice.

One of the simplest questions we as career practitioners can ask our clients, and often one of the most difficult questions for our clients to answer, is: “What do you want to do?” Having a realistic career goal is the first step to developing an action plan, but from a client’s perspective, choosing a career goal can be daunting. How can career practitioners assist clients in setting their goals?

Interests

The first and often easiest place to start career exploration is to examine what interests our clients. There are countless interest profiles and assessments available to help with this. The reason personal interests are important is simple: we work harder when we are doing something we find interesting. From a jobseeker’s point of view, doing something that appeals to their interests means they will find more joy in work. Not every task at work will be enjoyable, so it is important for career practitioners to make sure their clients seek job opportunities

that balance uninteresting tasks with engaging ones. This is also an opportunity to explore a variety of career goals, weighing the interesting and uninteresting aspects of each.

Guiding Principle
Career development entails determining interests, beliefs, values, skills and competencies – and connecting those with market needs.
ceric.ca/principles

Skills and competencies

Often when we find something that we enjoy doing, we practice it and become skilled, so it is not uncommon for a client’s interests and skills to complement each other. When clients have competencies and skills in areas that are outside their interests, they can feel like they are “stuck” doing work they don’t want to do. I have worked with clients who, due to injuries or illnesses, could no longer do the kind of work they loved and so were facing retraining into new careers. Helping clients recognize links between what they loved about their past work, other things that interest them and the skills they have that are unrelated to their injuries can greatly improve confidence and help them come to terms with career change.

The reason personal interests are important is simple: we work harder when we are doing something we find interesting. From a jobseeker's point of view, doing something that appeals to their interests means they will find more joy in work.



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Self-exploration around the transferable skills clients use every day can also help with goal setting. I remember a client who claimed she had no skills because she had never held a paid job in 35 years. After doing some exercises to identify her skills, her attitude shifted and she could articulate unique skills she gained from her volunteer experiences. She uncovered career options in areas she enjoyed, using skills she already possessed, and was so successful that within a year she had won a performance award with her new company.

Values and beliefs

Perhaps the most important component of job maintenance is finding a career choice that supports or matches a clients' core values. Simon Sinek (startwithwhy.com) says, "People don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it." Jobseekers who can articulate why they are drawn to a certain kind of work or why they perform certain tasks will appeal to employers who understand and share those values. It is not easy to uncover why we do what we do; it often takes hard work, introspection and motivational questioning by career practitioners to help clients uncover their values. We can learn a lot from asking ourselves why we do things the way we do or why we choose to do the things we do. If a client's job is to enter customer contact information into a database, ask "why do you do this?" "What benefit does this task bring to the company/to the customer/ to your work load?" Clients who can articulate their "why" make the employer's job of determining their "fit" much easier.

Connecting with labour-market needs

When I am talking to clients about their job search, there are two key messages I try to convey to them: first, don't settle for a job that is a poor fit, and second, be open to new and unexpected opportunities.

Several of our workshops talk about "fit" – demonstrating how our skills and values match the job or the company, and how we as jobseekers can assess a company's fit for us. A couple of years ago, I was working with a client on his resume for a butcher's assistant job.

His resume was very short, unfocused and lacked personality. When I began questioning him about what he enjoyed about meat cutting and why he was interested in the field, he confessed that he had no interest in it at all. He was feeling so desperate for work that he decided to apply to a job he thought others would find too disgusting to apply to. With further conversation and motivational questioning, it came out that he had worked summers painting houses with his uncle and loved the work. When we ended our meeting, this client had an entirely different career focus, a well-targeted and well-supported resume, and a new excitement about his job future.

Sometimes opportunities come from completely unpredictable sources. I facilitate a workshop about networking, where we offer clients strategies to more effectively reach out to their existing networks and to build strong professional networks. A recurring theme is "network with everyone"; you never know where a lead might come from. One client shared a story about when she was having an interview for a "survival job" at a coffee shop, and a patron stopped her on her way out to offer her a job with her husband's company, which was a much better fit for both her experience and her interests. Another client was looking for a payroll position when she accepted an invitation to take dance lessons with a friend. After the class, the two women were chatting with the dance instructor and learned that they were getting ready for an upcoming festival and were looking for temporary help in marketing. My client had no direct experience in marketing but felt she had the technical skills to do the job. They spoke on several occasions and the dance company agreed to hire my client and train her in marketing. She had never considered this as a career choice but loved every minute of it.

Every client is unique, and only they can find their paths. As career practitioners, our goals are to help our clients know themselves better – to uncover their passions and talents. We can help them foster a positive attitude and excitement about exploring their career options. We can build their confidence, so they have the courage to explore new opportunities and find a "fit" for their values and interests to realize their career goals. ■

AUTHOR BIO

Lisa Noonan is a Workshop Facilitator with Job Junction, a Nova Scotia Works employment resource centre. She started in the career development field in 2010 and has worn a variety of "hats," including Information Resource Specialist, Case Manager, and is now the Team Lead for job search workshops. Celebrating the success of her clients when they achieve their career goals and believing that she makes a difference in their lives are what motivates her.



10 QUESTIONS

Dr Mary McMahon is an Honorary Senior Lecturer in the School of Education at the University of Queensland, Australia, where she has lectured in career development and career counselling at the undergraduate and post-graduate levels.

Dr McMahon is a developer and co-author of the internationally recognized *Systems Theory Framework of Career Development*, which takes a holistic “individual in context” view of career development. She applies systems theory and systems thinking in her work on narrative career counselling and qualitative career assessment.

Dr McMahon will deliver a keynote address at the Cannexus National Career Development Conference, Jan. 28-30, 2019, in Ottawa. She is a co-editor (along with Dr Nancy Arthur and Dr Roberta Neault) of the forthcoming *Career Theories and Models at Work: Ideas for Practice*, published by CERIC and launching at Cannexus19.



Describe why career development matters.

Career development matters because it can offer a form of support for people who may have arrived at a challenging period of life in relation to their learning and work options. As practitioners who understand career development, it is easy for us to think career development matters. We need to remember, however, that others in the community such as potential clients and stakeholders may not know why it matters, and a constant challenge for us is, I think, to advocate for our field.

Which book are you reading right now?

Right now I am very busy with work and sadly, am not currently reading anything other than academic literature. When I do read for pleasure I most usually read crime fiction and enjoy the work of a range of authors. When I start a book, I like to finish it as soon as possible and I put everything else off until I get to the end.

What do you do to relax?

I like to walk in the park near our home every day and I regularly go to Pilates. I find going to the beach and swimming in the surf is a good way of unwinding. For me though, the best form of relaxation is to get away from everything by going camping.

Name one thing you wouldn't be able to work without?

I would miss my diary if I lost it. I need to know each night what I am doing the next day so that I can visualize how I will manage it.

What activity do you usually turn to when procrastinating?

When I am at home, I walk around the house and then sit down with a cup of tea. I try to read something different or do some smaller tasks before getting back to whatever I am procrastinating about.

What song do you listen to for inspiration?

I like any kind of music. I've recently been to the musical *Beautiful* about the music and life of Carole King and I came away in awe of her talent.

Which word do you overuse?

So.

Who would you like to work with most?

I would most like to work with an aid organization trying to learn from and make a difference in the lives of people living in challenging circumstances.

Which talent or superpower would you like to have?

I would like to have the power to make the world a kind, fair, just and peaceful place where differences are solved through respectful, open and honest discussion.

What do you consider your greatest achievement?

I think pursuing my education has been my greatest achievement because of the opportunities that it has opened for me. ■



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CERIC is a charitable organization that advances education and research in career counselling and career development.

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