

CareerCycles

A Holistic and Narrative Method of Practice

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CareerCycles

PRE-READING QUESTIONS

As you read this chapter, keep the following questions in mind and jot down ideas as you read:

1. How is a narrative method of practice different from traditional test-and-tell assessments?
2. What is a career counselling framework and why is it valuable to both client and career practitioner experiences?
3. What are the key practitioner skills required to successfully facilitate this narrative method of practice?
4. What benefits and challenges do you foresee when attempting to use this narrative method in your career development practice?

Introduction and Learning Objectives

This chapter describes a holistic, narrative framework and method of practice for career counselling (Zikic & Franklin, 2010) in which clients tell their career and life

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stories and transform the meaning from those stories into choices for their future. Career stories reveal important, valuable, and personally relevant clues to uncover possibilities that have been shut down, ignored, or dismissed by others. By carefully tuning into clients' stories, career practitioners help clients gather and organize what they want in their career and life: what's important now, the strengths they want to use, and other key components to empower career and life choice making.

This chapter begins with an overview of the framework for the CareerCycles (CC) method of practice followed by a description of its two main processes: (a) the career and life clarification process, and (b) the intentional exploration process. The case of Charlotte illustrates the two processes. In the notes to the career practitioner section, a narrative definition of career is presented along with information on how to include assessments into the CC method. This section concludes with information on how to use the CC method in multiple sessions and how to bring closure to the sessions. The chapter closes with a five-step summary of the CareerCycles method of practice.

In this chapter you will learn:

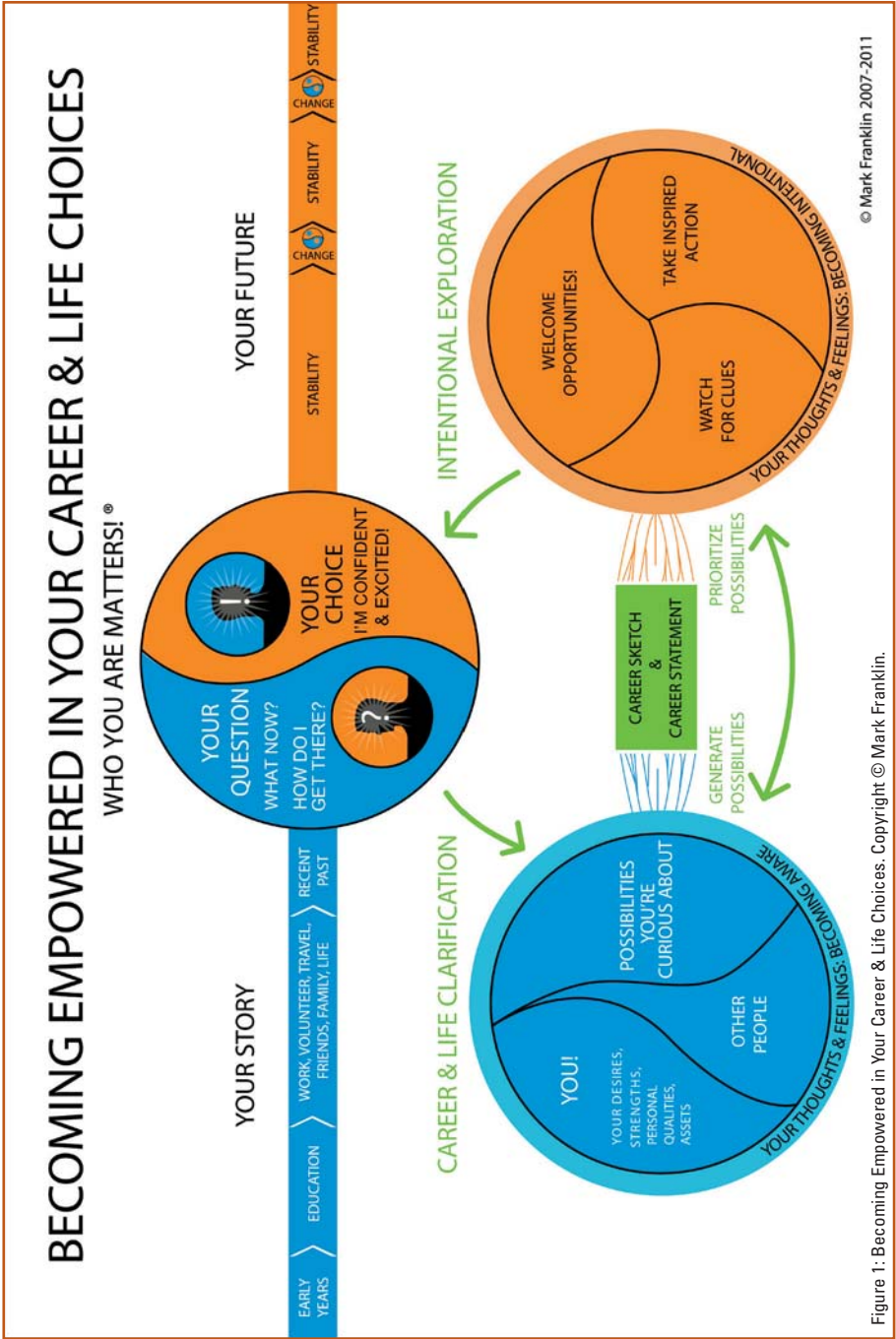
1. How the CareerCycles method of practice integrates narrative, happenstance, cognitive approaches, and positive psychology.
2. How to initiate a collaborative, narrative client experience that engages client as expert, and reframes dissatisfaction into career and life desires.



A Canadian Metaphor

Tap each maple tree, collect sap, refine into syrup, eat and be strengthened!

Picture a maple forest in the spring time during “sugaring off” when sap is collected, and boiled down to make maple syrup. One’s early years, high school and postsecondary experiences, jobs, and travel, can each be considered one maple tree in a forest of trees that is one’s life. The narrative process of career counselling is like tapping each tree for the sap or the relevant desires, strengths, personal qualities, assets, influences, and possibilities. Once all the sap has been collected, it is boiled down to make maple syrup, which in our metaphor, is a succinct statement of the client’s present situation and future desires. Eating the maple syrup that one makes is similar to becoming strengthened and empowered in one’s career and life choices or the concentrated knowing drawn from one’s life and career experiences.



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Figure 1: Becoming Empowered in Your Career & Life Choices. Copyright © Mark Franklin.

3. How to gather and organize client desires, strengths, personal qualities, assets, influences, and possibilities, from a client's career and life story.
4. The role that beliefs play in an emergent, narrative career counselling context, and how to align a client's plan with their mindset so they take inspired action and welcome opportunities.
5. Specific exercises and tools to enact the CareerCycles method of practice.
6. How to identify which client groups most benefit from this approach.

CareerCycles (CC) Method of Practice

The overall framework for the CareerCycles (CC) method of practice is illustrated in Figure 1, which graphically depicts its two main processes: (1) career and life clarification and (2) intentional exploration. The CC method of practice comprises over 40 documented interventions within those two processes. It also includes working tools, client handouts, and a training program. Each intervention includes a description as to when to use it, expected outcomes, career practitioner actions, and resources.

The Case of Charlotte

Charlotte, age 33, was working as an advertising account manager in the health and beauty sector. She had been back in the workforce for two years after a year of maternity leave, but found herself dissatisfied. "I'm not going to save the world one bra at a time," Charlotte says, referring to the work she did on a bra account. "I knew there was something else out there but I didn't even know where to go to figure it out." When we began working together, Charlotte stated her career question: "What now, given that I now have a family and my priorities have changed? I have a few ideas ... should I pursue one of them or something else?" Like most people in career pain, Charlotte wanted a quick answer. She wanted to move forward in her career. The paradox is that to move forward in a satisfying direction, she first needed to step back. Let's walk with Charlotte through the CareerCycles framework.

Career and Life Clarification Process

In this process, the career practitioner elicits the client's story and from it gathers and organizes the relevant components (the sap), which are put into a working document called a Career Sketch. Once the Career Sketch is completed, the client is encouraged to draft a personal Career Statement (the maple syrup). Analogous to becoming strengthened by consuming the energy in maple syrup, clients who have a written Career Statement are encouraged to "live their Career Statement" in order to become empowered, making the gap between where they are and where they want to go seem smaller and more manageable.

The client and practitioner begin by collaboratively drafting a key career question, for example, “What should I do next in my career?” or “How can I be more effective in exploring my options?” (See Figure 1.) The client and career practitioner frequently return to this question as a way to ensure that the discussion is moving in a direction that best fits the client’s self-defined needs.

The approach involves looking at the client’s life as narrative chapters. (See “Your Story” in Figure 1.) After completing the segments entitled “Early Years and Education” on the timeline, the client will list life and career experiences, jobs, volunteer, travel experience, parenting, and so forth. This segment is congruent with Super’s (1980) holistic lifespan, life-space approach. The final segment of Your Story represents the recent past — this may be a current or recent period of education, employment, or unemployment. Clients are given the task of drafting their own annotated timeline, showing years, ages, likes and dislikes, and lessons learned in each chapter of their life. Typically clients feel a certain amount of relief and comfort as they realize that this method of practice can help them “connect the dots” from their career story.

The next step in this process is to build the client’s Career Sketch (Table 1).

| CAREER SKETCH | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Desires: What you want and what’s important to you (DD) = deeper desires</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • | <p>Strengths: Skills and knowledge you want to use (D) = want to develop</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • | <p>Natural interests, emerging passion, evolving identity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • | <p>Possibilities you are curious about:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Internal to your organization: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2. External with another employer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3. Self-employment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4. Volunteer/Service: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5. Lifelong learning/ Education: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6. Travel/live elsewhere: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7. Leisure, family, friends, personal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • |
| <p>Personal qualities: Personality and how others describe you</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • | <p>Assets: Education, credentials, experiences, additional skills, & knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • | <p>Other people’s influence and your life roles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • | |
| <p>Your thoughts, feelings, and insights.</p> | | | |

Table 1: Career Sketch. Copyright © Mark Franklin.

This simple table is used to gather and organize the client's important information. The client's relevant information relates to Bridges' (1998) D.A.T.A. (desires, abilities, temperament, assets), which is expanded in the CC method to include desires, strengths, personal qualities, assets (education, credentials, and other skills), natural interests, influences of other people, possibilities the client is curious about, and the client's named thoughts and feelings. Drawing from narrative therapy, the career practitioner works with the client to "thicken their story" and undo the negative effects of problem-saturated experiences, and focuses the client on re-authoring a more positive future (White, 2007). Getting feedback is a powerful intervention with a variety of possible outcomes, including confirmation that the client is on the right track with one or more career possibilities. As much of the feedback is usually more favourable than the client expects, the feedback increases the client's confidence in being able to achieve a career goal. These new career and/or training possibilities and any additional input are incorporated into the Career Sketch.

Therefore, ask the client to identify a handful of trusted allies and request career-related feedback. To debrief the feedback, ask for the most meaningful feedback first.

- How was the experience for you, to get this feedback? How did you feel about it?
- Were there any surprises? If so, how do you account for this?
- Let's go through this in enough detail so that we can really see what they said. I need you to be somewhat selective about what we talk about here.

A key outcome of this process is the creation of the Career Statement. This distillation of the Career Sketch is a brief, positively worded crystallization of the client's emerging self-awareness of her/his career possibilities. For many clients, writing and reading aloud their Career Statement is the first experience they have in articulating what is truly important to them, what they authentically want to do, who they really are, and the possibilities they are most curious about and want to explore.

Charlotte's Career and Life Clarification Process

Charlotte's first task was to draw a timeline of her life, highlighting what she liked, choices she made, and what she learned in each chapter of her story.

"Walking through my story gave me the freedom to see that anything was possible," said Charlotte. "There were no bad or impossible ideas. Even talking about what I wanted to be when I grew up — a teacher — was an eye opener. Because I was so deeply into my advertising career, with 7 years of experience, I couldn't see how I could make a good change. I didn't realize that skills can be transferred into other places." Charlotte possessed strong managing, coaching, and mentoring skills. "I

didn't realize that using these skills, I could do something really different." Charlotte approached a few trusted allies including acquaintances, co-workers, and friends. "The feedback reminded me about what I like and took me out of the negative place I was in. It reminded me of what I liked about what I was doing."

She continued, "It made me feel great hearing what others said about me, and knowing there were options. I didn't realize there were so many possibilities. I had the power within me to do those things and didn't have to go back to school. Going through a list of skills, looking at past jobs, things I did in college, I gathered skills in all experiences, not just my job." This is a perfect example of how skills and knowledge may come from earlier chapters of your life.

The next step was for Charlotte to draft her Career Statement, a brief statement highlighting seven key outputs from the narrative process: desires, strengths, personal qualities, assets and demonstrated interests, influences of other people, and possibilities.

- *Here's what I want ... (Desires).* I am working with people and loving it; I'm having a reasonable workload, and job advancement. I'm teaching, mentoring, supporting other people; I'm doing good and giving back. I've decided to have more stability and more time for my family.
- *Here's what I want to do or use ... (Strengths).* I want to teach, coach, mentor, and manage. I want to use interpersonal and verbal communication. I want to develop relationships, use conflict-resolution skills, and serve clients. I want to organize and co-ordinate, do strategic thinking, generate ideas, and use my advertising knowledge.
- *Here's the kind of person I am ... (Personal qualities):* I am a person with a tremendous sense of responsibility. I'm reliable, though a bleeding heart. I'm a reader, introspective, and either really on or really off.
- *Here's what I bring with me (Assets):* 6+ years of experience in advertising, wedding planning experience, university courses, director of student advocacy at college, cosmetician — loved it, diploma in advertising.
- *Other people:* I'm mindful of how my role as a parent of a young child continues to influence my career and life choices.
- *Here are the possibilities I'm most curious about and want to explore:* ad agency with a focus on non-profit clients; fundraising and event co-ordinator; self-employment in the form of a website for new mothers; a position in a postsecondary institution such as teaching or student services.

For Charlotte, after years of working on advertising accounts for corporate clients, part of her Career Statement included: "What's important to me is doing good and giving back."

Intentional Exploration Process

In this process, the career practitioner guides the client to use his or her Career Statement to notice clues about new and exciting possibilities, to take inspired action related to those clues, and to “welcome relevant opportunities.” (See Figure 1.) Next the client reads the Career Statement, and the career practitioner immediately affirms the Career Statement and introduces the notion of “living your Career Statement.” The career practitioner, by showing a positive mindset, furthers the intentional exploration process — the practitioner is showing the client how it feels to have a completed Career Statement. From this place, the client is ready to be introduced to the components of the intentional exploration process.

Using the CC framework as a visual aid, the career practitioner asks the client to “watch for clues” as the first step, so that the client’s now positive mindset will shift the focus onto evidence that supports the client’s desires. This approach is different from focusing on the negative clues one often notices when placing emphasis on obstacles, hearing “bad news” in the media, or experiencing career or goal anxieties. Positive clues that a client notices make it easier to take inspired action, which is the second step. The third step of welcoming opportunities supposes that clients remain open to both planned and unplanned opportunities. Because clients are watching for clues, career practitioners using the CC method will see an increased likelihood of clients taking advantage of planned happenstance and generating more “beneficial unplanned events” (Mitchell, Levin, & Krumboltz, 1999).

Helping clients become intentional with their thoughts and feelings is also an explicit component of the framework. During the intentional exploration process, clients often experience emotional highs and lows. During low emotional periods, it is particularly important for career practitioners to guide clients to return to their positive mindset by focusing on positive thoughts and challenging negative ones.

Other interventions used here include *Choice Map* (Adams, 2004), *Wouldn't It Be Great* (Hicks & Hicks, 2004), selections from the “happiness activities” found in *The How of Happiness* (Lyubomirsky, 2007), and many others drawn from the burgeoning field of positive psychology. Introducing clients to the notion that they can choose better-feeling thoughts and allow opportunities to appear contributes to their positive mindset and builds their confidence that it may be easier than they initially believed to attract satisfying opportunities.

To keep track of a client’s intentional exploration, the career practitioner works with the client to create a Possibility and Exploration Plan or PEP (Table 2). This working document gathers and organizes in one place the client’s career exploration information. Each career and life possibility the client wants to explore is listed in a separate row of the PEP. The practitioner guides the process and creates a fun context by encouraging the client to picture each opportunity using the metaphor of playing in a sandbox to generate ways of taking inspired action. Next to each possibility in the

| PRIORITY POSSIBILITIES I'M CURIOUS ABOUT | WATCH FOR CLUES: <i>Internal, External, and Environmental</i> | TAKE INSPIRED ACTION | POSSIBLE REQUIREMENTS |
|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | Why I think I'd like it. How it fits with my Career Statement. | To find out more: On my own; e.g., Internet research. With other people, e.g., field trip/field research. | Examples: skills, degree, experience. |
| E.g., Pharmacist | Internal clue: want responsibility for patients. External clue: first day working as pharmacy tech. Desires: help people, more authority. Strengths: lead, interpersonal. Personal qualities: quiet, like one-to-one. Assets: PT experience, interest in chemistry, languages. | Research admission criteria to 3 Ontario universities. Field research with friend who is studying biochemistry. Field trips to universities. | University undergrad in sciences, good grades. High school credits to apply to university. |

Table 2: Possibility and Exploration Plan — Copyright © Mark Franklin.

PEP, the client lists internal and external clues, inspired actions they intend to take, and skills and credentials that might be needed to achieve the newly identified career possibilities.

For example, consider a female client working as a pharmacy technician who wants to explore becoming a pharmacist as a career possibility. The career practitioner metaphorically jumps into the sandbox with the client, asking, “What are some clues you’ve noticed?” and then, “What do you want to do to explore this further?” The client reveals an internal clue that she wants responsibility for the patient. An external clue occurred her first day at work as a pharmacy technician when she saw the pharmacist in action and realized she wanted that role. Inspired actions the client wants to do include researching admission criteria to three universities, conducting

field research interviews with a friend of a friend who is studying biochemistry at university, and “field trips” to postsecondary institutions.

Charlotte’s Intentional Exploration Process

During the “your story” intervention, Charlotte discovered, among many other desires and strengths, that she wanted to combine her desire “to do good” with her knowledge of the advertising world. This desire formed part of her Career Statement. When Charlotte reads her Career Statement aloud in session, that moment marks the beginning of the intentional exploration process.

Like many clients, Charlotte was hopeful though unsure whether she could bring her Career Statement to life. The career practitioner has to “hold the space” and share the belief with the client that she can and will move towards what she wants. After this important shared experience, the career practitioner shows the client the intentional exploration graphic in Figure 1, and introduces and explains the components of this process: watch for clues, take inspired action, welcome opportunities, and become intentional with your thoughts and feelings.

SPOTLIGHT: WHO YOU ARE MATTERS! A CAREER AND LIFE CLARIFICATION GAME

by Mark Franklin

When it comes to becoming empowered in your career and life choices, who you are matters! This message surfaces through an innovative career and life clarification game, designed for youth and adults. By playing this discovery game with like-minded people, participants identify strengths, learn from each other, and recognize who and what influences them. The resulting Career Sketch and Career Statement provide participants with concrete evidence of their growing self-awareness and desired direction, resulting in confidence to engage in meaningful career-planning dialogue. Designed as an alternative to traditional career assessments, the game brings to life the “career and life clarification” process of the CareerCycles method of practice.



The career practitioner then introduces the Possibility and Exploration Plan as the working document to keep track of the client's intentional exploration. Each possibility the client is curious about is entered into the first column. In Charlotte's case, one possibility was an ad agency with a focus on non-profit clients. The next column contains clues that the client has noticed. An external clue came in the form of a suggestion from her mother that Charlotte speak with an acquaintance who worked at a marketing and fundraising agency that worked exclusively with non-profit clients. Their tagline, "marketing for a better world" seemed a good fit for Charlotte.

Charlotte's first internal clue was that she felt excited and inspired about taking action. Her inspired action was to summon the courage to call her mother's acquaintance at the agency. Much to Charlotte's surprise, she was offered a job interview. Several days later, the newly confident Charlotte received a job offer from the company, which she accepted.

The effectiveness of Charlotte narrating her career story is evident in the rekindled energy, good feelings, and positive mindset that flowed from the engaging process of telling her story and then writing her Career Statement. Her intentional exploration was made easier, and almost effortless, compared to the dread so many people attach to traditional job searches, especially in a down job market.

How does Charlotte feel about leaving the old company and joining a new one, more aligned with what's important to her? "I'm really excited. Leaving my old company was bittersweet. They gave me a really nice sendoff. But it wasn't working for me — I'd lost my passion for it. I wanted to do something that gave back, and would be more fulfilling. Now I am."

Key Concepts for Career Practitioners Using the CC Method of Practice

Working With the Definition of Career

Within the CC framework, career is defined as: "*The full expression of who you are and how you want to be in the world, which keeps on expanding as it naturally goes through cycles of stability and change.*" Sharing this definition with clients is a novel way of instilling relief because it veers away from career as a job and introduces a more holistic view of one's career. Let's break it down into component parts.

- "*The full expression*": Think life, not job! "Full expression" goes beyond work to include volunteering, education and training, activities based on your interests, parenting, eldercare ... it's all you do.
- "*Of who you are*": Your desires, strengths, personal qualities, demonstrated

interests, education and credentials, additional skills, life roles, influences of other people, and your own thoughts and feelings about who you are, and how you're expressing yourself in the world.

- “*And how you want to be*”: Most people know what they don't want and spend too much time thinking about that. What do you want? What's important to you? These are the questions that reveal your desires. Negative experiences are valuable in helping you translate your “don't wants” into “wants.”
- “*In the world*”: Where your deepest wishes meet your daily reality.
- “*It keeps on expanding*”: If you've ever thought your career is contracting, think again. There are no mistakes: only expanding clarity about what you really want emerging from what you now know you don't want.
- “*As it naturally goes through cycles*”: It's perfectly natural that who you are changes. Think cycles, circles, and spirals, rather than a study-work-retire straight line.
- “*Of stability*”: Whatever the duration — 6 months, 6 years, 16 years? — stability gives you the basis for making a difference by doing things you're proud of.
- “*And change*”: Whether self- or externally generated, many people reflect back on periods of change as a blessing in disguise as they provide opportunity for career and life clarification.

❖ *Stop and Reflect*

Consider your own situation in light of this definition. What do you think of this definition? Does it apply to your career and life? Did you equate job with career? If you now recast your career using this definition, how does it change your sense of yourself and your identity?

Incorporating Assessments Into the CC Method

The narrative approach in general, and the CC method of practice in particular, positions the client as expert. The client is the storyteller and arbiter of what to include in his or her Career Sketch and Career Statement. This is in contrast to what often occurs when career practitioners rely on career tests and standardized assessments. Even with competent interpretation and good intentions on the part of the career practitioner, the fact that assessments have been created by experts moves the locus of control of a client's career choices away from the client and into the hands of the assessment authors. In contrast, positioning the client as expert storyteller empowers the person and conveys the message that all they need to make a good career and life choice exists within.

That is not to say that assessment results cannot be integrated into the CC method of practice. For example, Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, True Colors, Temperament, and Personality Dimensions results can be included in the personal qualities section of the Career Sketch. Interest inventories such as the Strong Interest Inventory or the Jackson Vocational Interest Survey can be integrated into the Natural Interests section of the Career Sketch. Career possibilities that clients are curious about that emerge from assessments can also be integrated into the possibilities section of the Career Sketch. Clients themselves determine whether or not to include this information in the Career Statement they write, using the content of the Career Sketch as input.

Sessions and Termination

Clients typically utilize four to seven sessions to work through the CC method of practice. In shorter engagements, clients may reach the beginning of the intentional exploration process and be satisfied with that progress. In a seven-session program, sessions are split between the two processes in the CC method, with a middle session as a transition between the two processes in which the Career Statement is read aloud. Even a one-session narrative intervention can yield a very positive outcome, showing clients that their stories contain much of the essential components required to make good career and life choices. Some clients may want to engage the career practitioner in additional sessions of intentional exploration.

When career sessions are terminated, clients will have completed several working documents of the CC method: the Career Sketch, Career Statement, and the Possibility and Exploration Plan. These tools, as well as the learning gained from the process and through the narrative, can be used by clients as they continue their career journeys on their own.

An important personal attribute outcome of the overall experience for clients is greater confidence and excitement than before for their careers. This is accompanied by a sense of hope and empowerment by which clients' lives are improved, enhanced, and deepened (see "Outcome Study Results" below). They discover how their mindset, thoughts, and feelings help or hinder their ability to move forward, and in this way they are better able to integrate the past, present, and future. While some clients make career changes, others realize they have much of what they want in their present career situations. Clients who choose to stay in their existing careers may still find enrichment by introducing into their lives activities, volunteer opportunities, further education, or travel, in keeping with the broader definition of career. In this way clients create new meanings and achieve a sense of well-being in their careers, which in itself is a positive long-term outcome.

Client Populations Successfully Served Using the CC Method

The CC approach has been successfully used with thousands of clients: youth nearing the end of high school, postsecondary students and recent graduates, those in early career, mid-career professionals, second career seekers, and those exploring late career and retirement scenarios. Clients with troubling or traumatic personal histories may require special sensitivity when using a narrative approach. Informed consent for a narrative approach is also especially important. Difficult life periods can be skipped, or the career professional can simply ask for an overall lesson learned from troubling or traumatic experiences. It is important to respect the client's boundaries of what he/she would like to share (i.e., what the client would consider too personal) and to inform the client that if he/she is in need of individual counselling or psychotherapy, a referral can be made.

Alignment With the Standards and Guidelines

The CC framework aligns with competency S3.2 described in the *Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners* (National Steering Committee, 2004), "To Demonstrate Method of Practice in Interactions with Clients." The specific competency S3.2.1 says "to develop a method of practice that is grounded in established or recognized ideas." In keeping with this competency, the CC method of practice is "a personally held model or theory" which is "a combination of models or a personally evolved model" and allows the practitioner to "conduct practice guided by theory." It also complies with the competency objective "to ensure consistency and flexibility in your counselling approach." As such, the CC method can be described and documented. However, to allow for flexibility, especially across clients and practitioners, the CC method may be adapted or refined in collaboration with Associates and Licensees, and is therefore a living entity requiring periodic changes and refinements. Additionally, not all interventions within the approach will be appropriate to all client situations, and therefore career practitioners will have to rely on their training and skills to utilize only the interventions that suit the client needs.

Five-Step Summary of the CareerCycles Method of Practice

1. **Name your question:** Is it a "what now?" question, or more of a "I know what I want, now how do I get there?" Be specific.
2. **Timeline your story:** What did you like and learn in each chapter of your story? Chapters can be early years, education, career portfolio, or the recent past.
3. **Gather and organize:** Examine everything from your story and categorize all elements into seven categories of desires, strengths, personal qualities,

assets, natural interests, other people's influences, and possibilities.

4. **Write your Career Statement:** Highlight the most important elements of your story that you've gathered and organized. Summarize in a succinct paragraph.
5. **Live your Career Statement:** Use it like a compass to direct your intentional exploration by watching for clues, then using the clues to lead you to take inspired action. Then, welcome meaningful opportunities, from wherever they may come.

Outcome Study: Results of CareerCycles Method of Practice

An outcome study of CareerCycles narrative method of practice has shown that individuals in "career pain" who went through the CareerCycles program experienced statistically significant increases in the six key measures of hope, optimism, confidence, resilience, curiosity and exploration, and personal growth.

Mark Franklin and evaluation consultant Basak Yanar designed and carried out a study in 2012 to explore the effect of the CC approach on clients. The researchers found that both of their hypotheses were correct — firstly, that a narrative approach to career management would have a positive impact on individuals' personal attributes including hope, confidence, resilience, optimism, and personal growth; and secondly, that these key personal attributes would be correlated with important career measures including career clarity, job satisfaction, job fit, and alignment between job and career expectations.

The outcome study collected data from 68 past clients, 72% female, 28% male, who experienced on average five sessions with a career professional from among CareerCycles' team of associates, all of whom used the narrative method of practice designed by practice leader Mark Franklin. After completing the CareerCycles program, subjects were asked to compare the extent to which they thought, felt, and behaved before and after the program. The Psychological Capital Questionnaire (Luthans, Norman, Avolio & Avey, 2007) was used to measure hope, optimism,

Career Buzz Radio

by Mark Franklin

"Welcome to Career Buzz, Canada's unique radio conversation that empowers lives, enriches careers, and energizes organizations," begins our weekly career radio show on CIUT, heard in Southern Ontario at 89.5 FM and available worldwide online at <www.ciut.fm>. Launched in 2006, the hour-long show hosted by Mark Franklin and five guest hosts has featured over 300 career stories and experts. Listeners hear ordinary Canadians share their extraordinary and inspirational stories. Career development expert guests have included Norm Amundson, John Krumboltz, and Barbara Moses. The show aims to uncover the intentional actions that our guests have taken and hopes to inspire our listeners to find their own "luck"!

Podcasts are available at <<http://www.careercycles.com/category/radioshow>>.

resilience, and self-efficacy (confidence). Two additional measures were “Curiosity and Exploration Inventory” and “Personal Growth Initiative Scale.”

Summary

The use of the narrative approach at the core of the CC positions clients as experts in their own career and life choices. Each story within a client’s career and life is metaphorically like a maple tree that can be “tapped” by the career practitioner for important elements. The “sap” gathered in this way can be refined into a concise Career Statement, like maple syrup, which empowers the client in their career exploration.

The CC method of practice is a cohesive and expanding repertoire of interventions to guide career practitioners to help their clients become empowered in their career and life choices. It is a truly holistic approach that aims to incorporate all facets of a person’s life experience and then translates those into viable career options and increased career awareness. First developed by Mark Franklin, the CC approach has benefited greatly from the insights and additions of the many career practitioners who have used it and the intention is to continue to collaborate, refine, and expand the CC method in the future collaboratively with CareerCycles Associates and Licensees, and other career practitioners who choose to use it.

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Additional References Supporting the Outcome Study

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Discussion and Activities

Discussion

Discussion Questions

1. “Career is from the Latin carrus meaning passage, course, or wheeled chariot. One’s career is one’s life. In this sense, all counselling is career counselling, since all counselling is about one’s life” (Peavy, 2004, p. 44). Discuss.
2. The task of career counselling is to help people construct and enact more meaningful career narratives. Accomplishing this task requires an understanding of narrative resources for making meaning, criteria for adopting a narrative as one’s own, and the relationship between narrative construction and enactment, between the reflective spectator on life and the active participant in life (Cochran, 1997, p. x).
 - How is a narrative approach different from more traditional approaches to career development (e.g., Super or Holland, etc.)?
 - What client issues might best be addressed by narrative approaches?
 - What is your opinion of assisting clients from multiple theoretical perspectives?

Personal Reflections

1. Imagine yourself engaging in the CC method as a client. What do you imagine the process would look like between you and the counsellor? What qualities would you expect from a narrative-focused counsellor?
2. Narrative career counselling is underpinned by constructs such as reflection, meaning making, story, and personal agency. It takes a holistic view of individuals and their career concerns. A particular emphasis is placed on the counselling relationship. How would you explain narrative career counselling to a client? How might those from other non-European American cultures respond to this approach? What would the challenges be for you in working with clients from a narrative perspective?

Career Practitioner Role

In what ways does the narrative approach described in this chapter address competency S3.2.4 in the Standards and Guidelines, which states: develop and implement a process for achieving clients' goals that are consistent with your own method of practice? Does this approach to career counselling raise any questions for you?

Activities: Using the CareerCycles Framework

Session One: Getting Started

Find a partner who would like to have a first session with you. Use the interventions below to guide your first session.

1. **What's on the radar screen?**

Find out what possibilities the client has been thinking about. These may be self-generated ideas or ideas that have been provided by significant others. Eventually, you will enter them into the Career Sketch. Try statements and questions such as:

- Sometimes, people with a question about what they should do, have some preliminary or vague ideas. I like to use the metaphor of a "radar screen." What's on your radar screen of possibilities right now? What have you been thinking about, however vague it may be?
- What else?

2. **Initial Desires Clarification**

Find out what the client wants in his/her career life and use these initial desires when drafting the Career Sketch. When the client talks about a negative experience, reframe negative statements by reversing negative experiences into positively worded desires. For example, in response to the question, "*What didn't you like about that job or experience?*" client may say things like: the boss was a

micromanager; it was very repetitive; too much dealing with customers; terrible shifts; et cetera. Your response might be:

You know what's great about negative work experience? It helps you clarify what's important to you in making work or career choices. Let's take each one of the aspects of that job you're telling me, and let's turn it into a statement of what's really important to you. So if the boss was a micromanager, what would be important to you in a manager?

The client may say things like: *Boss gives me space to do my work.*

Great! Let's take the next one... if that job was really repetitive, what would be ideal? Is it variety? Or challenge?

You can use these initial desires when drafting the Career Sketch (optional). Other activities could include introducing the CareerCycles framework and processes and continuing your story as described below.

3. **Introduce the CareerCycles framework and processes.**

Reframe the client's question in the context of the CC framework using the model in Figure 1. Use a Career Sketch (Table 1) and draft a question from the client's own words that he or she is inspired to answer. Use all information gathered so far and use it to introduce the rest of the Career Sketch, as you fill in what you know already.

- *Let me take a just a few minutes to step back and reframe everything you've told me so far so we can move forward. I'd like to start with this framework. Please have a look as I walk you through it briefly.*
- *Now, let me use a Career Sketch and show you what I mean.*
- *First of all, let's draft your question.*

Write the version of the client's question from your notes. Work with the client to draft a good question.

- *That's a good question, and I don't know the answer to it! Do you want an answer to this question? Great! This is our goal—answering your question. Research shows that outcomes of counselling are better from a client's perspective when there is a stated goal. This question will be our goal. Okay?*

Now look at the tabular part of the Career Sketch. Go back and forth between Career Sketch and framework so client gets a firm connection between the career and life clarification process and the sections of the Career Sketch.

I'm going to fill in what I heard from you so far.

Now, go through each section of Career Sketch and enter from your notes what you heard from the client.

TIP: as you write each item in the Desires section, you can say...

Wouldn't it be great if you [fill in with each of the client's desires]? Wouldn't it be great if you have a commute that was less than half hour? Wouldn't it be great if you had more creativity in your role? (Hicks & Hicks, 2004)

4. **Work with the narrative:**

Continue into Your Story directly from the previous intervention, and get started on the narrative while still in the first session. You will likely not finish, but getting started on this intervention shows client how this process works and engages them deeply so that they will want to return for follow-up sessions.

- *Your question is really important. As much as clients want career professionals to wave a magic wand over their head and answer questions like this, it just doesn't work that way. However, what I do know is that a question like yours yields answers when we walk through this process.*

Ask for consent.

Your question is related to how you got here, how you got to this point in your life and in your story. Would it be okay for me to take you back in time and ask you some questions about how you got to this point in your life? This tends to be very useful, to uncover ideas about who you were and what you wanted to do, before other realities settled on top of you. It's really good to start in the early years and walk forward from there. I'd like to start in your early years, before high school, up to age of 14 or 15. Okay?

Below are questions you can use. While you are walking through the client's story, be sure to pause each time a desire, strength, personal quality, or asset (demonstrated interest, other skill, and/or credential) arises and debrief it. Ask if it's okay to write it down. Use their language, not yours!

Be curious. Here's your chance to probe, wonder aloud, and ask questions about what you're hearing. But stick with the story and be careful not to get lost in a tangent. Remind yourself and the client where you stepped away from the story and return to that point ...

We were just talking about your transition from high school to postsecondary, so let's go back there now.

When a new possibility comes to mind, ask if it's okay to add it to the Possibilities You are Curious About. Be sure to explain that here you're in brainstorming mode.

We're exploring new territory here, so if something comes up, let's see if it passes the bar. If you're curious about it, then let's write it down. If you're not, no problem, we'll just let it pass. Don't worry, my feelings won't be hurt if you discard any ideas of mine!

You likely won't complete the story in the first session. At the end of your time together, review where you are and let the client know you will send them an email for a between-session task to create their own timeline.

Let me hold the story here. We're progressing really well. I'd like to ask you to complete the story using a timeline. I have some notes about this which I will send you. It asks you to timeline your story and annotate it with comments about what you liked and learned. The purpose is to remind yourself of your own story, to bring it all to mind, and also to act as a visual aid for us as we continue to walk through your story next session.

This may take you into the next session or beyond depending on the age of the client, the depth and breadth of their story, and your own probing.

Session Two: Continuing Your Story

Questions to begin the elicitation of the story:

What's changed since we began talking about your career question? Would it be okay to continue where we left off last time?

Here are some questions to walk the client through the chapters of their lives ...

- *When you were a child and parents or other important adults asked, What do you want to do, or be, when you grow up? What kind of answers did you give?*
- *What kind of child were you? What did you like doing in your free time?*
- *As a child what work roles did you see and what was your reaction to them? Your parents? Other important adults like grandparents or aunts or uncles? What opinions do they still hold about your future?*
- *What advice or other messages did you receive about the world of work when you were a child?*
- *Let's move to high school... What did you like in high school? Courses? Is that still an interest of yours? What about activities you did outside school? Are you still interested in that?*
- *Did you work during school? What did you like about it? What skills did you gain? What knowledge did you gain?*
- *What was your state of mind as you approached the end of high school? What*

possibilities did you consider? What possibilities did you reject? What led you to reject that?

- What led you, ultimately, to decide to do what you did? (e.g., apply to university)
- What led you to major/specialize in _____? What did you find fascinating during your postsecondary education? What else?
- How did your interests change or evolve during your education?
- What was your state of mind as you approached the end of your undergrad degree/college diploma? What possibilities were you considering?
- What did you do next? What did you like about it? What strengths did you enjoy using? What skills did you develop? What knowledge did you gain?

For each period of education, work, parenting, travel, et cetera, ask:

What did you like? What strengths did you enjoy using? What skills did you develop? What knowledge did you gain? What led to your leaving?

Your Story is a significant intervention in which many of client's challenges and personal stories may arise. The CareerCycles method of practice lets personal information emerge in its own time rather than asking for it directly.

Readings

Supplementary Readings

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