



# CERIC

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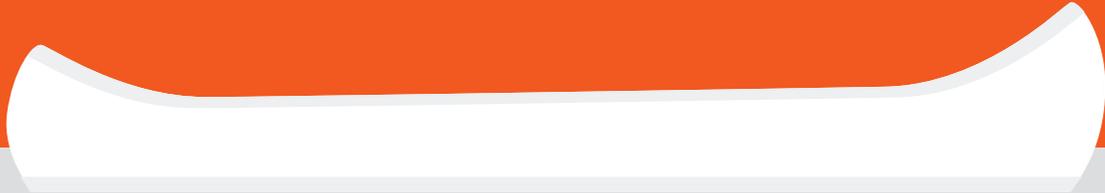
## Career Work in Action

Discussions and Activities for  
Professionals

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KAREN SCHAFFER & JULIANA WIENS

YOUTH



Based on CERIC's Guiding Principles of Career Development

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Discussions and Activities for  
Professionals

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**YOUTH**



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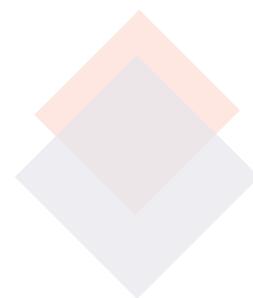
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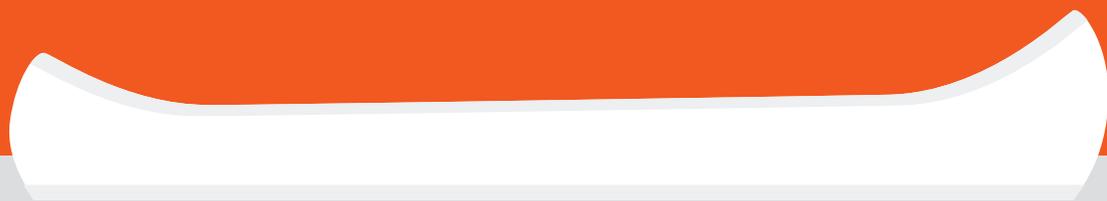
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# **Introduction:** Where we are starting from?



## ■ Purpose

The purpose of this action plan is to provide you - the professional - with insights and ideas for working with your clients that align with the CERIC Guiding Principles of Career Development. We begin by painting a picture of youth that speaks to how they are situated within the Guiding Principles, and we then suggest discussion questions and activities that professionals can use when providing career support to this particular population. We have grouped these questions and activities according to 5 five key areas of career work, and we anticipate that professionals will draw upon each of these areas based on client need, and according to the Organic Career Support Framework that we present and define that we present and define in the *How do we help?* section.

## ■ Definitions

Throughout this document, we use the term **professionals** to refer to the action plan's intended recipients because we recognize that individuals from a wide range of occupations - both inside and outside of the career development field - may provide career-related support to those with whom they work. You will notice as well that we define the demographic group in question - youth - very precisely. Our intention is not to exclude anyone, but rather, to provide specific enough parameters to allow for meaningful discussion. We recognize that lives and circumstances vary widely, and that not all youth will identify with the themes and ideas that we discuss. We also recognize that some of the discussions and activities described below could apply to individuals who do not fit within our identified parameters.

“

“This work is not standardized and cannot be scripted.”

“

“Working effectively with clients means recognizing that career is lifelong and complex.”

## ■ Philosophy

As authors, we adhere to certain philosophies in our work that stem from our professional identities as Career Counsellors, and our experiences of working with a range of populations. We believe in the importance of locating ourselves, and for that reason, we identify as white, middle class, and raised in a colonial system. We emphasize that other worldviews, cultures, and social locations are equally valid, and that each professional has a responsibility to understand how their own location impacts their practice.

**Most importantly, we believe that while recognized best practices do exist within the career development field, this work is not standardized and cannot be scripted. Each client is different, and working effectively with clients means recognizing that career is lifelong and complex.** Navigating career work requires knowledge, empathy, patience, compassion, intuition, cultural competence, and the effective use of theories and frameworks. We invite you to engage with this action plan as it works for you and for the client in front of you.

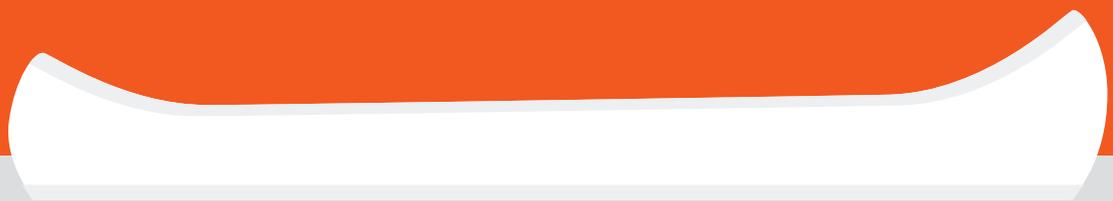
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“Navigating career work requires knowledge, empathy, patience, compassion, intuition, cultural competence, and the effective use of theories and frameworks.”





# **The Guiding Principles:** Situating youth within the principles of career development



## Who's in Front of You?

### Youth

High school students, primarily in Grades 10-12, who are having to make career/education-related decisions. These students may be engaged, highly engaged, or disengaged. We recognize that when it comes to career, students' levels of engagement will vary depending on a myriad of internal and external factors, including their experiences and circumstances. That said, all students are making choices about their futures, regardless of whether or not they are engaged in school.

Before getting to the action, let's look at how the experiences of youth line up with each of the Guiding Principles...

**For a full version of  
the Guiding Principles  
infographic, see  
Appendix C.**

## CAREER DEVELOPMENT...



IS A LIFELONG PROCESS OF BLENDING AND MANAGING PAID AND UNPAID ACTIVITIES: LEARNING (EDUCATION), WORK (EMPLOYMENT, ENTREPRENEURSHIP), VOLUNTEERISM AND LEISURE TIME.

Many high school students participate in a range of structured and unstructured activities, partly because they have more time than adults to develop their interests and activities freely, and partly because they are encouraged and expected (and sometimes even required) to do so by parents, the school system, and society. High school students aren't necessarily aware that this balancing of multiple activities is a lifelong process, or that they can transfer the skills that they're learning to the job market. It's just what they do. Along with their parents, they may also be unaware that the activities they enjoy and excel at can lead to viable career paths, for instance in gaming or in creative arts.

## CAREER DEVELOPMENT...

ENTAILS DETERMINING  
INTERESTS, BELIEFS, VALUES,  
SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES –  
AND CONNECTING THOSE WITH  
MARKET NEEDS.



At this stage, a student's career-related self-awareness is still limited to their immediate experience, and is often without nuance. Some students are more self-reflective than others, but it's unlikely that many would have an explicit understanding of the relationship between personal values and career choices. Furthermore, because high school students are still in the process of solidifying their own identities as young adults, they may not yet be able to separate their own values, beliefs, and interests from those of their peers or families.

High school students sometimes make big career decisions based on simple criteria, taking one skill or interest and extrapolating it to a job (e.g. "I like arguing so I should be a lawyer"). A lack of exposure to actual work experiences and jobs compounds this tendency, which means that students often identify job interests based on what they see in the media (e.g. wanting to be a crime scene investigator or criminal profiler as seen on TV), or on what sounds interesting or appealing on the surface. Often students will come up with one good career idea and hang onto it tightly, which helps them formulate their self-identity as well as navigate conversations with parents and peers.

## CAREER DEVELOPMENT...



SHOULD BE SELF-DIRECTED;  
AN INDIVIDUAL IS RESPONSIBLE FOR  
HIS OR HER OWN CAREER, BUT IS  
NOT ALONE – WE ALL INFLUENCE  
AND ARE INFLUENCED BY OUR  
ENVIRONMENT.

Students at this stage of life receive many mixed messages about self-direction. Parents, the school system, and society all encourage students to be self-directed and to make their own choices, but at the same time, they may not provide true opportunities for self-direction. For example, becoming self-directed involves learning to manage the consequences of one's decisions. If students cannot fail for not handing in assignments, to what extent are they learning to become self-directed?

Many high school students struggle with the responsibilities of school. At this stage, they are still learning how to manage and fulfill their obligations, and it is reasonable to expect that even highly engaged students will make mistakes. For some high school students, mental health and learning issues can emerge that adults may interpret as resistance to self-direction or lack of engagement. For example, a student with depression or undiagnosed ADHD may appear to just have poor time management skills, which may not be the case.

## CAREER DEVELOPMENT...



IS OFTEN SUPPORTED AND SHAPED BY EDUCATORS, FAMILY, PEERS, MANAGERS AND THE GREATER COMMUNITY.

Family members - particularly parents - influence career development to a large extent, both explicitly by articulating values and expectations, and implicitly by role modelling and constructing what is “normal”. Teens listen when their parents share ideas and expectations, but they also observe closely whether or not their parents enjoy their jobs, and they assess whether they themselves want to be as stressed or want to earn similar incomes. Sometimes a student makes a career choice and that choice becomes “truth” – i.e. a shared idea or goal that the family talks about and comes to expect. Positive feedback (e.g. “we love that you want to be a doctor”) can cause the student to commit more deeply to their choice without questioning it further.

The school system can also shape career development, especially if there’s a choice between an International Baccalaureate program or academic stream, and a “basic” or general stream. Career expectations are built into those choices. Guidance counsellors and other influencers might be the pivot between encouragement or discouragement of a dream career. Peers also hold enormous influence, as students engage in school and in career exploration to a greater or lesser extent based on cues from their friends.

Overall, the question “What do you want to do?” requires an increasing amount of justification as students approach graduation and as those around them start inquiring as to their next steps.

## CAREER DEVELOPMENT...



IS DYNAMIC, EVOLVING AND  
REQUIRES CONTINUOUS  
ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE  
THROUGH MULTIPLE TRANSITIONS.

Without a doubt, getting through junior high and high school requires a certain amount of resilience on every student's part, as they navigate social, emotional, and academic challenges. As well, the transition from junior high to high school is itself significant. Students shift in maturity, and teachers expect more. Many students move from a smaller, more contained world to a bigger world that requires them to make decisions that affect their lives.

Many students will experience less visible transitions both in and out of school, including divorce or a death in the family, emergence and/or diagnoses of mental illnesses or disabilities, and moves or changes in peer groups. All of these transitions require resilience.

## CAREER DEVELOPMENT...



INVOLVES UNDERSTANDING  
OPTIONS, NAVIGATING WITH  
PURPOSE AND MAKING INFORMED  
CHOICES.

While many high schools offer curricula to help students identify career options, fewer opportunities exist for one-on-one career counselling to help them make sense of the information they're receiving. Too many students still focus on the "funny" or outlying results of vocational assessments (e.g. "the test said I should be a clown"), and not on what the results suggest about their personalities. Students who have access to a high school co-op, a work experience program, a study abroad opportunity, or similar experiential education opportunities may experience more clarity.

In high school, particularly in the final two years, students are making choices that affect their post-secondary options, whether they realize it or not. Grades can determine university acceptance, and many post-secondary programs require specific high school prerequisites. Also, once high school students reach college or university, they may have very different experiences of subjects they enjoyed previously (e.g. "I loved biology in high school and now I hate my biology classes"). Engaged high school students will make informed choices based on their interests and on the knowledge they have, but these choices often require re-evaluation as students graduate and continue to gather lived experience.

## CAREER DEVELOPMENT...



MEANS MAKING THE MOST OF TALENT AND POTENTIAL, HOWEVER YOU DEFINE GROWTH AND SUCCESS – NOT NECESSARILY LINEAR ADVANCEMENT.

High school itself is a system of linear advancement, so naturally, most students define success within this context - get a good grade, get a good grade the next time, graduate, etc. Breaking out of this thinking is difficult for most students, as it's the ocean in which they swim. Many teens won't discover their talent or potential until after high school, as either the system isn't conducive to their strengths, or they simply aren't ready.

Parents usually want their kids to "get a good job and be happy," but at this stage, most students haven't yet defined for themselves what a "good job" is or what makes them "happy." For many youth, the process of defining growth and success for themselves occurs naturally in the next stage of life, as they separate from family and start making their own decisions.

## CAREER DEVELOPMENT...

CAN BE COMPLEX AND COMPLICATED, SO CONTEXT IS KEY – THERE MAY BE BOTH INTERNAL CONSTRAINTS (FINANCIAL, CULTURAL, HEALTH) OR EXTERNAL CONSTRAINTS (LABOUR MARKET, TECHNOLOGY).

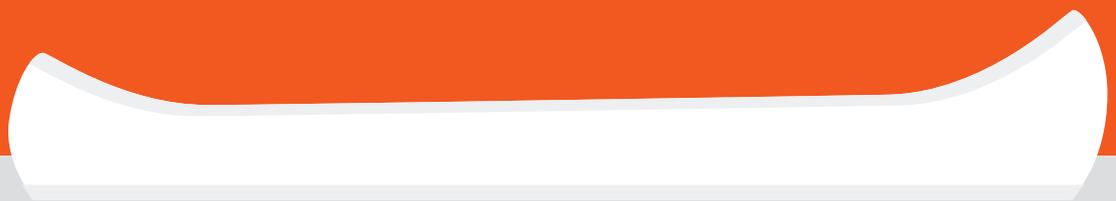


On a micro level, many students navigate complex circumstances that career professionals need to be aware of in order to support them effectively in making good career choices. For example, children of immigrant parents sometimes experience incredible pressure to succeed as a reward for their parents' sacrifice. Students often receive the message that "life is ahead of you, you can do anything," but in reality, all sorts of financial, academic, health, and/or environmental constraints can get in the way.

On a macro level, today's high school students will face workforce shifts more profound than the Industrial Revolution. In the next several years, technology will change the job market radically, even as students prepare for it. The complexities associated with these upcoming changes are completely invisible to these students, just as they are to many workers. The past experiences of current career professionals may differ significantly from the experiences of youth entering today's workforce, and it is important to keep these differences in mind when working with this group. On a final note, current high school students may be part of a future that has a Universal Basic Income, which would offset some of the challenges they face.



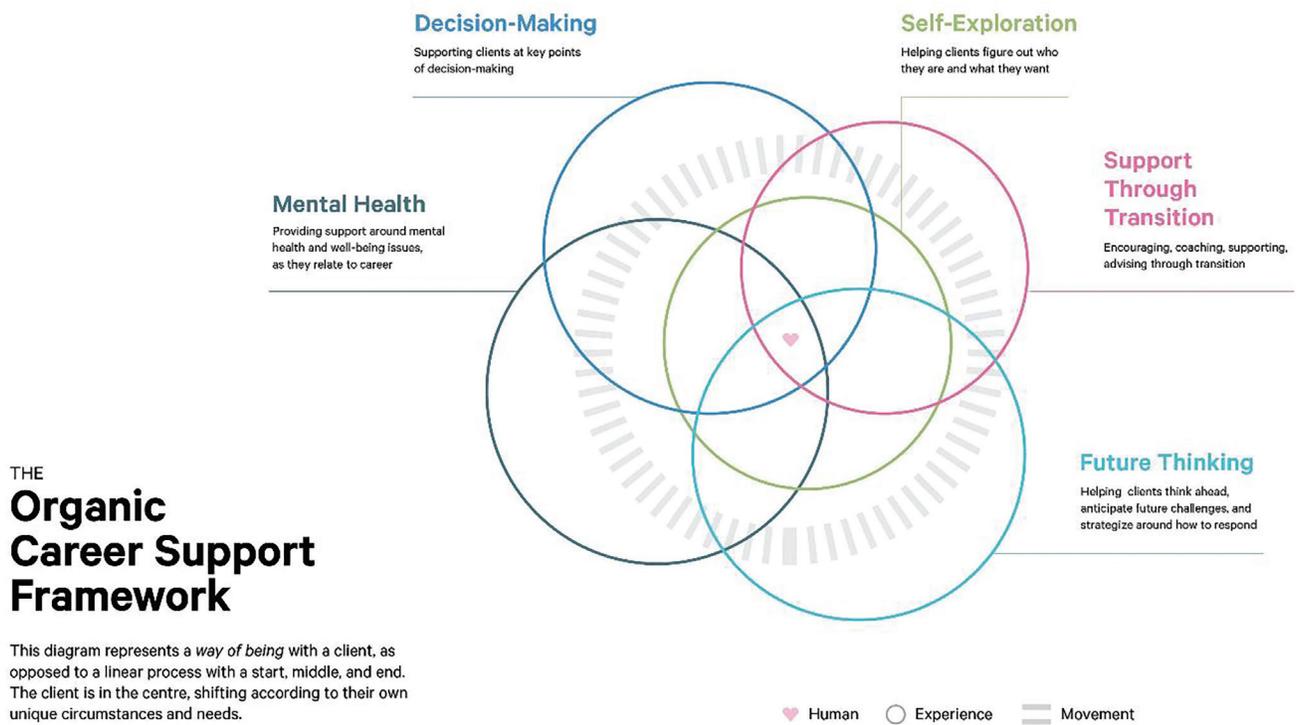
# The Organic Career Support Framework: How do we help?



Having situated Youth inside of the Guiding Principles and having seen where this group’s particular complexities lie, it may seem as though the next logical step would be to present a “script” of what to do next - a step-by-step process outlining exactly how to deal with identified issues. **We can tell you with certainty that no such script exists, and that no predetermined process can speak to all needs and situations.**

Instead, each professional’s style of communication and understanding of what’s essential evolves over time. No two professionals will say the same thing in quite the same way - nor should they. The art of career work lies in striving to understand a person’s experiences and then working with the presenting need. That need can shift from session to session, or even within a session itself. The role of the professional is to move fluidly among states, and to provide the types of discussions, interventions, and information that will support the client in moving forward.

We capture this fluidity using the Organic Career Support Framework, a client-centered approach that highlights movement among 5 key areas of practice. We then move to Suggested Discussions and Activities. Our intention is to provide some relevant discussions, conversational starting points, opening questions, concrete interventions, and fun activities for each of the 5 key areas of career support.



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## Career Work in Action: Youth

This diagram represents a *way of being* with a client, as opposed to a linear process with a start, middle, and end.

In the sections below, we capture this fluidity using the Organic Career Support Framework, an approach that highlights movement among 5 key areas of practice. The positioning of the client in the middle of the diagram emphasizes the importance of client-centeredness, as each client navigates the world of career development according to their own unique circumstances and needs, while the professional plays a supportive role in this process.

The smaller circles in the diagram represent the 5 key areas that together form the scope of career development support:

- **Self-Exploration:** Helping clients figure out who they are and what they want
- **Decision-Making:** Supporting clients at key points of decision-making
- **Support Through Transition:** Encouraging, coaching, supporting, advising through transition
- **Future Thinking:** Helping clients think ahead, anticipate future challenges, and strategize around how to respond
- **Mental Health:** Providing support for issues around mental health and well-being, as they relate to career

The arrows pointing back and forth represent the multiple ways in which clients can shift among these 5 key areas. *Career is complex, and as such, this movement occurs organically*, sometimes within a series of sessions, sometimes within the space of one session, rarely in a linear fashion, and always according to the unique journey of the individual in question.

Examples:

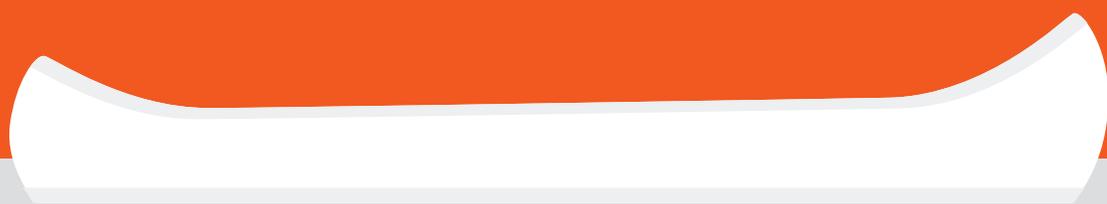
- ✓ Halfway through exploring career path options with his Guidance Counsellor (**Self-Exploration, Decision-Making**), John identifies that he's no longer worried about his future plans, and that right now he's really more concerned about finding a summer job (**Support Through Transition**).
- ✓ Ling is trying to plan for university (**Support Through Transition**), but is struggling to make any decisions because she feels so exhausted and overwhelmed (**Mental Health**).
- ✓ After looking at a few options, Mae has decided to become an X-Ray Technician just like her Aunt (**Decision-Making**), but does not have a clear sense of how technology could transform this field over the next several years (**Future Thinking**).

Organic career support is fluid and dynamic, and as such, professionals must be prepared to shift with their clients in and out of these 5 areas, as needed.





**Guiding Principles  
in Action:**  
Suggested  
Discussions and  
Activities for use with  
youth



## From Principles to Action: Discussions & Activities

### Starter Discussion

On a scale of 1-10, how hopeful are you feeling about the process of finding work? When people ask you the “What are you doing after high school?” question, how do you respond? Do you have a “ready” answer, or are you unsure of what to say? What does it feel like to hear that question? What kind of answer do you think people are expecting? Are you content with your answer or do you wish that you had a different one?

### Important Because

These questions prompt your student to consider the extent to which they’ve bought into the expectation that all teens should graduate high school with a solid career plan. Many students do have a firm plan, but do their plans really need to be so firm? Encourage high school students to reflect critically on why it’s considered so important for everyone to choose a career path right away, and whether or not the “solid plan” is in fact as important as society would have them believe.

# Self-exploration: Helping clients figure out who they are and what they want



## Suggested Discussions

### 1. It's Normal Not to Know

This discussion normalizes not having a solid post-graduation career plan, and reassures your student that they will have many chances to figure things out and to change their minds. For example, they may change direction within university once they get started, or switch to a college program, or take a gap year - the possibilities are numerous. The key is to help your student build some flexibility into their choices and timelines.

- **Questions to ask:** What's important to you? What would you like to learn more about? What if we were to focus on gaining experience and trying different things now, instead of worrying too much about a future plan? Think of people who you consider successful. How long did it take them to figure out their career plans?
- **Important Because:** While high school students often experience internal and external pressure to know the future, the complexity of career decision making is such that only experience, exposure, and growth will truly test their ideas. This discussion can help reduce pressure and allow high school students to see more flexibility within the system.

### 2. What That Vocational Assessment Really Means (No You're Not Supposed to be a Clown)

This discussion provides context for any vocational assessment that your student may complete, either on their own, or in guidance counselling, or as part of their coursework. Explain to your student that an assessment is an algorithm - it cannot read minds, it can only offer programmed suggestions based on a combination of answers. These suggestions are merely ideas to consider, and they are not the "truth."

- **Questions to Ask:** Did you like any of the suggestions that came up on your assessment? What did you like about them? Were there any suggestions that you hated or thought were stupid? Why did you hate them? Are there any suggestions that you feel are missing from this assessment?
- **Additional Step:** When your student talks about their “whys,” help them turn negatives into positives (e.g. “I would never want to work outside” becomes “I would like to work indoors in an office”). Gather these statements to make a list of work-related desires.
- **Important Because:** Students will reject vocational assessments if they don't see the connection between themselves and their results. Once students understand the limitations of these assessments, they can then take their results in stride, and can also use the suggestions provided as a starting point for exploring their interests.

### 3. Define: Good Job

High school students often hear multiple references to “getting a good job” from parents, peers, and society. The “good job” concept tends to remain undefined and unexamined, which can leave students feeling as though they need to achieve something important even though they aren't sure what that something should look like. This discussion encourages students to think reflectively about what they consider a “good job” to be, and helps them begin to separate their own needs from the expectations of others.

- **Questions to Ask:** What do your parents mean when they talk about a good job? What do your peers think is a good job? What is society's definition of a good job? What do YOU think it means to have a good job?
- **Important Because:** The more clearly students can think through their needs and wants around work, the more agency they'll have in making choices that align with their desires. This discussion also encourages critical thinking.



## Suggested Activities

### 1. Five Things Exercise

#### Instructions:

- Fill out as many answers as you can on the Five Things Exercise worksheet (Appendix A). Be aware: this exercise is harder than it looks!
- If you get stuck, generate more answers by asking yourself *why* you like something (e.g. “I like to play basketball” because “I like competing with a team”).

#### Directions for Professional

This exercise works well as a homework assignment, but if your student struggles to generate answers, you may find it helpful to continue the exercise in session. Use the answers that your student provides to dig in deeper – find out *what* they like reading, *who* they like hanging out with, etc. Your student may struggle with the “good at” and “proud of” questions in particular, which gives you some insight into their level of self-confidence. Help them generate answers to these questions by pulling from their stories about things they like to do. Note that students with severe anxiety may not be able to complete this exercise.

#### Debrief

Use this exercise to encourage students to think positively about themselves. When reviewing answers, use the follow-up question “Why do you like that?” to highlight areas in which students may need to learn more about themselves before making career-related decisions.

### 2. Role Models Exercise

#### Instructions:

- Name 5 people who you admire. They can be living or dead, famous or not famous.
- List the qualities that you admire about each of these people.

## Directions for Professional

If your student isn't able to name someone they admire, ask them to identify what jobs they would take if they could choose from all the jobs in the world.

## Debrief

The list of admirable qualities that your student generates provides insight into what they consider important, i.e. their values. Highlight this connection for your student, and encourage them to consider various career and/or education paths of interest with their values in mind.

## 3. My Fav Thing

### Instructions:

- Bring in your favourite song, book, photo, game, or Instagram account, and be prepared to talk about why you love it.

## Directions for Professional

Prompt your student to come up with as many reasons as possible why they love the thing that they picked.

## Debrief

Encourage your student to think about how their particular choice reflects a deep knowing of themselves. Talk about the value and importance of learning how to self-reflect when it comes to making career-related decisions.

## 4. More Than One Job

### Instructions:

- Choose one of your interests (perhaps an item from the *Five Things Exercise*), and brainstorm at least TEN occupations that relate to that one interest. Extra points if you can name TWENTY occupations!

- Example: Reading ⇔ Author, Publisher, Acquisitions Editor, Content Editor, Copy Editor, Book Agent, Book Designer, Bookseller, Book Critic/Reviewer, Blogger, Researcher, Academic/Professor, Script Writer, Creative Development Executive, Marketing Coordinator, Publicist, Librarian, English Tutor, English Teacher, Children's Programming Coordinator, Film Producer, Archivist, Grant Writer, Report Writer.

### Directions for Professional

If your student gets stuck, allow them to research online to see if they can grow their list.

### Debrief

Students often assume that their particular interests limit them to one path only (e.g. History ⇔ History Teacher). Use this exercise to highlight the reality that a single interest can lead to multiple potential career paths.

## 5. VIA Survey of Character Strengths Activity (Youth Version)

### Instructions:

- Go to <https://www.viacharacter.org/survey/account/register>. Select the 'VIA Survey - Youth (Ages 10-17)' option, register, then complete the survey.
- Write down your top 5 strengths. Do you agree with your survey results? Why or why not?
- For each of your top 5 results, write down an example of a time when you used or demonstrated that particular strength.

### Directions for Professional

Acknowledge your student's strengths and look for ways to refer back to these strengths in future assignments, reflections, and discussions.

### Debrief

Emphasize the point that your student may also possess strengths in some of their lower-scoring areas. Encourage them to choose one strength and to focus on using that strength every day for one week. In a subsequent session, debrief the experience of focusing on a particular strength.

# Decision-Making: Supporting clients at key points of decision-making



## Suggested Discussions

### 1. Disproving the Domino Effect

Young people often struggle with the career myth that “one wrong decision will ruin my life.” They fear that if they make a single wrong choice early on, the dominos will fall in a certain direction forever, and they’ll never have any opportunities to change course. This discussion helps students understand that academics and careers are rarely linear, and that in reality, there are multiple ways to circle back to one’s interests.

- **Questions to Ask:** Do you ever struggle with the fear that one wrong choice will set you on the wrong career path forever? What might you do if you thought that you made a wrong choice?
- **Next Step:** Find examples of individuals whose career paths disprove the Domino Effect, such as famous people who discovered their callings later in life, or family members whose careers took unexpected turns.
- **Important Because:** The fear that one wrong choice will lead to a lifetime of unhappiness amplifies career anxiety. But the myth isn’t true! Life provides endless permutations of career choices. Students can benefit from the knowledge that there is more than one route to career

### 2. Identifying Your Allies

This discussion helps students figure out where they can access support when it comes to career decision-making. Talk to your student about the difference between an advice giver (someone who shares their opinions and hands out advice based on their personal experiences) and an ally (someone who supports your student in finding their own answers). Point out that while allies do give advice on occasion, they also encourage critical thinking and provide ongoing support.

- **Questions to Ask:** Whose advice do you value? Who makes you feel better after you talk to them? Who gives you ideas to follow up with on your own? Who in your life do you usually talk to before making decisions?
- **Important Because:** There is nothing wrong with good advice. That said, this exercise helps students evaluate thoughtfully the different kinds of support and feedback they may receive with regard to their academic and career choices.

### 3. Am I a Planner or an Open-ENDER?

This discussion helps your student identify whether they're a goal-oriented person who needs to have solid plans (i.e. a planner), or a more spontaneous person who prefers to make decisions as they go along (i.e. an open-ender).

- **Questions to Ask:** How important is it to you to have a career goal in mind? How important is it to you to leave decisions open so that you can be more spontaneous? How does your preference for planning (or leaving things open-ended) guide your decision-making?
- **Drawing Attention to Blind Spots:** Planners can get very attached to their ideas. Encourage them to think about what they will do if plans need to change so that they can feel more prepared when they encounter obstacles. Open-enders can sometimes miss opportunities because they lack clear focus. Help them to identify milestones and key points of decision-making.
- **Important Because:** Once students can identify whether they are planners or open-enders, they become better equipped to figure out what kinds of support they might need going forward.

### 4. Short Term vs. Long Term Decision-Making

This discussion helps students think through the timing of their decisions.

- **Questions to Ask:** What will you do the day after you graduate? What decisions do you need to make right away, and what decisions could be put off for later? How can you create more space and time for big decisions (e.g. applying to a program without being 100% certain whether or not it's the program you want)?
- **Important Because:** Students can become overwhelmed with the number of decision they have to make around graduation, especially if all of those decision feel big and pressing. For some students, the ability to prioritize some decisions and allow more time for others can reduce stress.



## Suggested Activities

### 1. Information Gathering (Part A)

#### Instructions:

- Make a list of all of your potential options for after graduation - university, college, travel, work programs, job possibilities, etc.
- For each option, write down what information you have, and what information you're missing.

#### Directions for Professional

This activity breaks larger decisions down into smaller steps by first asking students to figure out what information they still need to gather about each of their possibilities. At this stage, encourage them to assume that all options are possible (i.e. assume that you *will* get into university if you apply).

#### Debrief

Explain that the process of taking an inventory of options is a first step toward making a decision.

### 2. Information Gathering (Part B)

#### Instructions:

- Gather the information that you're missing for each of your potential options.
- Start by researching each option on the internet, but then make a point of seeking out information that you can't find online. For example, if you're interested in a particular school, try to talk to one of their students. If you don't have any personal contacts, contact the school for names of alumni or search through social media for blogs/vlogs or posts from current students.

#### Directions for Professional

Support your student in seeking out fresh, relevant information that will help them make decisions about their various possibilities. You may need to coach them through the process of reaching out to potential contacts.

**Debrief**

Invite your student to talk about what they learned, and to identify how this new information might influence their decisions. Acknowledge their resourcefulness, and point out to your student that the information-gathering skills they're developing now will also prove beneficial in future decision-making.

### 3. What Am I Worried About?

**Instructions:**

- Choose your most intriguing post-graduation option, and write down all of your concerns and worries about that possibility.
- Put a star beside the concerns that are the most significant or distressing to you.

**Directions for Professional**

Work through this exercise with your student once they're at a point of decision-making and have identified their concerns. If they're hesitant to make a decision, give them the space to name their concern and to see if they can resolve it for themselves (e.g. "I'm nervous that my choice will upset my Dad but I guess it's okay if he's upset at first, because eventually he'll see that I'm happy"). It may also be helpful to talk through worst case scenarios (e.g. "What if I hate being away from home?") and to come up with plans for how to respond should such scenarios actually occur.

**Debrief**

Invite your student to talk about what they learned, and to identify how this new information might influence their decisions. Acknowledge their resourcefulness, and point out to your student that the information-gathering skills they're developing now will also prove beneficial in future decision-making.

### 4. My Life Timeline

**Instructions:**

- Draw a long line on a piece of paper (turned lengthwise). Write 0 on one end of the line, and 100 on the other end to represent your age. Imagine that this line is your Life Timeline.

- Draw a dot on the line that represents your current age and grade. Add additional dots to represent significant life events between birth and the present (e.g. a family move, starting high school).
- Now look ahead, and add dots to your timeline that represent significant events that you anticipate will occur in the future:
  - Graduating from high school
  - Your first professional job
  - Career path changes that might occur further in the future (e.g. starting a new job in your 40s)
  - Life events such as buying a house, having children, going on a dream vacation, living overseas
  - Retirement
- Add one “stretch milestone” to your timeline, i.e. something that seems out of reach right now (e.g. climb Mount Everest).

Answer the following questions:

- How many years do you have between finishing school and retirement?
- How many years do you have between switching career paths and your retirement?
- How might you feel differently about your current decisions at the end of your career?

### Directions for Professional

This exercise works well as a group activity or as an individual activity (refer to Appendix B for a longer group activity instruction sheet). Make it playful and fun. Invite students to discover how much they can pack into a lifetime, and also emphasize the point that they will only be able to plan/know so much at this stage. Note that some students may find this exercise triggering, especially if they have experienced trauma. Provide these students with the option to not participate.

### Debrief

Talk about perceptions of time and the weight of decision-making. Discuss how important it is for students to make new decisions over time based on what they learn and experience, as opposed to remaining rigid about their current plans.

# Support through transition: Encouraging, coaching, supporting, advising through transition



## Suggested Discussions

### 1. All Emotions Welcome

This discussion highlights the range of emotions that students feel when they transition from high school into the next stage of life (university, college, apprenticeship, job). Identify for your student that they may feel excited for the future, anxious about everything changing, sad about high school ending, or all of these things, or none of these things. It's even normal to feel ambivalent or to feel differently on different days.

- **Questions to Ask:** What are all of the different feelings you have around graduating from high school and moving on to something new? Why would it be important to acknowledge all of these different feelings? How do other people expect you to feel?
- **Important Because:** Some students may find that speaking about how they feel and receiving validation makes all of their different emotions easier to manage.

### 2. What's Coming with You?

If your student is close to graduation, ask them to consider what skills, strengths, beliefs, and values they want to bring with them when they graduate.

- **Questions to Ask:** Which of your beliefs, skills, values do you want to “pack” for your new stage of life? Which ones do you want to leave behind? What kind of person do you want to be at college or university or in your job? How will you be your “true self” in a new environment?

- **Important Because:** Students may feel more in control of this major life transition if they have an opportunity to think about how they want to “be in the world” after they leave high school.

### 3. Get the Most Out of High School

If your student is transitioning *into* high school, they will have three or four years of development ahead of them in which they will have opportunities to try out all kinds of activities to see where their interests lie. This discussion encourages your student to consider which activities they'd like to explore.

- **Questions to Ask:** What are some activities that you might want to participate in while you're in high school? Why do you think it might be important to be involved in activities outside of class? Do you have any goals that you'd like to accomplish while you're here?
- **Important Because:** While not every student will participate in extracurricular activities, the more students can identify and engage in their areas of interest, the more prepared they will be to follow a similar pattern in college or university, where this type of well-roundedness is associated with increased employability.

### Additional Discussion Questions

- What are you going to miss about your high school life? How could you create a ritual for completion?
- What are your friends doing after graduation? What kinds of qualities will you look for in other people as you make new friends?



## Suggested Activities

### 1. Ask the Alumni

#### Instructions:

- Reach out to two or three people who have graduated from high school recently, and who are living lives that appeal to you (e.g. working at a cool job, attending university in a different city, etc.). Ask them what they remember about their transition into the post-high school world, and what
- advice they would give an upcoming high school graduate.

#### Directions for Professional

If you are working in a school setting, consider preparing an *Ask the Alumni* panel for a graduating class.

#### Debrief

Most students experience a range of emotions when transitioning out of a very structured system and into the unknown, regardless of how they feel about their high school experience. Normalize their feelings using the stories and advice of recent graduates.

### 2. Preparing to Launch

#### Instructions:

- If you are continuing in school after graduation (i.e. university or college), think about some of the ways in which you can prepare for your first day.
  - If your new school is local, wander around the campus
  - If your school is away from home, start a packing list of things that you can bring with you to help you settle in
  - If you have your course list for first semester, find out what you can read or learn in advance to help you feel more prepared

### **Directions for Professional**

Not every student will feel the need to prepare in advance, but some students will find it calming to be able to take some of the “unknown” out of their initial transition. Help your student think of ways to create familiarity and comfort ahead of the first day of post-secondary.

### **Debrief**

Invite your students to reflect on the extent to which they feel differently about their upcoming transition after having completed this activity. Discuss the value of taking action to orient toward change as opposed to merely feeling anxious about the steps ahead.

# Future thinking: Helping clients think ahead, anticipate future challenges, and strategize around how to respond



## Suggested Discussions

### 1. You Can't Know it All (Yet)

This conversation highlights the reality that “career” isn’t a single decision. Instead, career is a series of smaller decisions that a person makes throughout their lifetime as new information becomes available. Explain to your student that while they can take steps right away to figure out their interests and to make decisions (i.e. self-exploration), many of the answers they seek for the future can only come from life experience.

- **Questions to Ask:** What experiences led you to discover your current interests? How did you know you were interested in \_\_\_? What steps will you take to put yourself in the path of new interests in the future (e.g. take the occasional risk, try new things, be curious, be open to possibilities, etc.)?
- **Important Because:** This discussion can reduce the pressure of having to figure out one’s entire career path right away, and can help students think about the kinds of attitudes and qualities - curiosity, openness, sense of adventure, willingness to take risks - that can connect them to exciting career possibilities as they move forward.

## 2. Focus on the Challenge

Jobs that exist in today's labour market are likely to shift dramatically over the next few decades given the pace of global change. This discussion encourages your students to think about what kinds of challenges they want to take on throughout their careers, as opposed to focusing solely on job titles or occupations.

- **Questions to Ask:** When you think about your future career, what global or local challenges interest you? What problems do you want to solve?
- **Important Because:** A broad focus on problems and challenges provides your student with a direction in which to learn and grow, while at the same time encouraging them to remain open to a wider range of occupations and possibilities.

## 3. Are You Ahead or Behind (or Neither)?

The purpose of this discussion is to emphasize that timelines change after high school, and that when it comes to education, it doesn't make sense to compare one's journey to someone else's. Grade school is organized in such a way that everyone advances at the same pace, however, no such structure applies to life after high school. Students can choose to go to university or college right away, or take a gap year, or work and then consider school later in life - the possibilities are numerous. Encourage your student to follow their own timeline instead of trying to adhere to some prescribed "perfect" timeline that doesn't exist.

- **Questions to Ask:** Do you have a sense of what you want your school/work timeline to look like over the next few years? Is it important to you to follow the same timeline as other people? What would happen if you just followed your own timeline? Why might someone want to go through (post-secondary) school as quickly as possible? Why might someone want to take more time?
- **Important Because:** Sometimes students experience stress and anxiety at the thought of going to college or university, specifically because they believe they have to follow a rigid timeline (e.g. the 4-year degree right after high school). This discussion serves to relieve some pressure by challenging the concept of a prescribed timeline, and by helping students think about their own ideal timelines.



## Suggested Activities

### 1. Challenge Reflection

#### Instructions:

- Find one news or information article that talks about a challenge you're interested in taking on as part of your career, and bring the article with you to session/class.
- Answer the following questions:
  - What is the source of the information in this article, and how do you know that it's valid?
  - What new perspective does the article provide with regard to the challenge in question that you hadn't thought of before?
  - According to the article, what does society need to be doing in response to this challenge? Do you agree or disagree?
  - What might you need to learn more about in order to contribute to this discussion further?

#### Directions for Professional

Introduce this activity once your students have identified challenges they'd like to take on throughout their careers (as per *Focus on the Challenge*). You may need to support the research process to ensure that students are sourcing accurate information.

#### Debrief

Invite your students to share their observations and reflections. Try to connect their answers to the last question to potential areas of career development.

### 2. Success Stories

#### Instructions:

- Find an example of a successful person (either from your own life, or from online research) who started on a particular career path, made a change, and is now doing something completely different.

■ Answer the following questions:

- What did this person study in school? What did they do prior to their career path change?
- Why did they decide to make a change? What emotions might they have experienced while going through that change?
- How do you think they feel now about having changed career paths?
- How might they apply knowledge from their previous work to their current career path?

### Directions for Professional

You may need to support your student in finding someone who's made a career path change, either by helping them research detailed articles and blog posts, or by encouraging them to ask people they know. If they do know someone personally, they can deepen the exercise by conducting an informational interview.

### Debrief

Point out specific actions that the successful person in question took to manage their career path change. Emphasize that many paths lead to success, even if someone changes their mind or doesn't figure out their true fit right away.

# Mental health: Providing support around mental health and well-being issues as they relate to career



## Suggested Discussions

### 1. The Impact of Transition

Students who struggle with change may have a difficult time either coming into high school, or leaving high school behind. Engage these students in a discussion about the emotional impact of a major life transition. Explore with them the range of emotions that someone in their situation might feel, and normalize feelings of excitement, sadness, and/or anxiety. In general, students can benefit from knowing that they will likely experience both “up” and “down” emotions, sometimes simultaneously.

### 2. Depression

Depression can sometimes make its first appearance in high school. Explore with your student some of the ways in which having depression (or depressive symptoms) might diminish positive or hopeful feelings about the future. Also be aware that at this stage, youth may be more likely to experience depression if their close peers experience depression. Ask your student how they are feeling about the future (e.g. on a scale of 1-10, how hopeful are you feeling about the future?), and check in with them around how their friends are feeling as well. Refer to supports if depression becomes severe or ongoing.

### **3. Anxiety**

This discussion becomes essential in cases where your student discloses that they have anxiety (or social anxiety). Possible questions: To what extent is anxiety shaping the choices you're making around school? What can we do to make your next few steps feel less scary (e.g. living at home during the first year of college/university)? What steps could you take to stretch yourself once you feel more settled? Refer to supports if anxiety becomes severe or ongoing.

### **4. Exhaustion and Burnout**

Some students may feel overextended in their school and extracurricular activities. They may be trying to balance too many activities, and/or they may struggle with perfectionism. Talk to your student about self-care, setting boundaries, saying no. Possible questions: On a scale of 1-10, how stressed/exhausted are you feeling right now? Are particular activities causing burnout, or is the combination of activities the issue? What steps can you take to make your plate feel a little less full?

### **5. Learning Disabilities and Other Neurological Impairments or Disorders**

For some students, high school may be a time when differences in brain function become more apparent, and in some cases, become diagnosed as disabilities or conditions. If your student has received a diagnosis (e.g. autism spectrum disorder, learning disability, etc.), they may benefit from a reminder that they're still in control of their career. Possible questions: How will this disability/condition factor into your choices going forward? What supports and resources will you require in order to succeed? How have others with similar disabilities/conditions succeeded in accomplishing their goals?

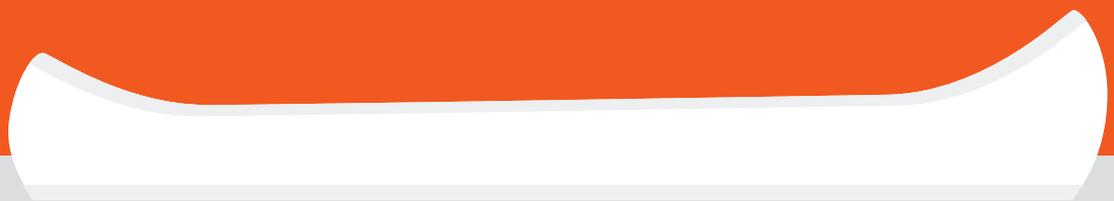
# Mental health: Steps for the Professional

1. Use scaling questions to evaluate feelings and symptoms. (E.g. “On a scale of 1–10, how anxious are you feeling?”)
2. Support your students in learning more about their issues through local or online groups, blogs, articles, or podcasts.
3. Support your students in identifying when they need to see a doctor for prescriptions, refills, medication adjustments, checkups, changes in symptoms, etc.
4. Provide information as needed/requested on accessible mental health services, including crisis lines and counselling resources.





# Appendices



For a full version of the Guiding Principles infographic, see Appendix C.

# Five things exercise

Write down 5 things for each answer. If you're stuck, do a variation on one thing – e.g. you're happy being on skates, you're good at hockey, and you're proud of making a particular team. These answers can come from any area of your life (work, school, personal, whatever). There is no perfect or "right" answer. If you get stuck, no worries; just do what you can.

## **A. What are 5 things that you like doing?**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

## **B. What are 5 things that give you energy?**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

## **C. What are 5 things that make you happy?**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

**D. What are 5 things you're good at?**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

**E. What are 5 things you're proud of?**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

**If you've completed the above...are you ready for the CHALLENGE ROUND?**

**■ Challenge Round**

If you have completed the above section and would like to challenge yourself to continue, keep going!

**A. Name 5 more things you like doing.**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

**B. Name 5 more things you're good at.**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

**C. Name 5 more things you're proud of.**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

If you have more answers to share in any category, list them here:

## Appendix B

# Timeline Game (Group Version)

Have students draw a long line, lengthwise across a rotated sheet of paper.

### Class/Group Instructions

Here is *your* timeline. Let's imagine that you will live to 100 and this is your opportunity to have a chance to play with some possibilities of what your life might be like. This is not "the truth" or a schedule. This is a game of possibility so that you can see how much space there is in your life for the things you think you might want to do. Write 0 on one end of the timeline and 100 on the other.

1. ***Put your current age on the timeline.*** Plot in one or two things that have happened in your life so far that have been meaningful to you, perhaps a move or a change of school or an important time you want to remember.
2. ***Now let's think about high school.*** Is there anything you'd like to accomplish in the next couple of years? Plot those accomplishments on the timeline.
3. ***Do you see yourself going to university or college?*** At what age? Will you take a year off to travel or work? When do you see yourself graduating? Is there further training you would need to do?
4. ***Let's stretch further into the future.*** Imagine your first full-time job post-graduation. If you have an idea about what you might like to do, put in that first step. If not, make something up!
5. ***Now around this time you're going to hit some other milestones.*** Imagine what these might be, and add them to your timeline – first car, first apartment, first place of your own, first major trip on your own (somewhere you've always wanted to go). Cost doesn't matter at this point - just imagine that you can afford everything you want. Stretch your imagination.
6. ***Perhaps you'd like to settle down one day.*** Think about when you'd like that to happen, and add it to your timeline. If you've thought about having a family, add your kids to your timeline.
7. ***Heck, do you think you'd like to be a grandparent someday?*** Add that to your timeline!
8. ***If you'd like to own a dog one day, or a horse, or whatever, add that to your timeline.***
9. ***What about buying a house?*** Have you ever wanted to own your own place, somewhere special?
10. ***Imagine something you'd love to accomplish*** – like starting your own business, writing a book, owning your own boat, traveling for a year in Asia, climbing Mount Everest, camping in the wilderness, taking a

solo trip, sailing around the world, competing in a gaming tournament, building your own house – and put it on the timeline. Don't limit yourself to just one accomplishment or leave things off because they seem impossible. Put everything on there.

11. ***What other things would you like to learn in life?*** Another language? Yoga? A musical instrument? How to fix cars? How to race cars? How to fly a plane? How to knit? When do you want to start that?
12. ***Let's go back to career.*** Is there a difference you want to make? Cure cancer? Fight poverty, or injustice, or climate change? Celebrate art? Build an orphanage? Adopt a baby, a kid, a pet?
13. ***Is there an area of expertise you'd like to build or future you want to achieve?*** Be a CEO? Own the business? Be a doctor? Speak and motivate people? Be a judge? Run for public office?
14. ***You will likely have multiple jobs and careers, building off your interests and knowledge.*** Imagine that you worked at your first career for awhile. Indicate on your timeline when you think you'd like to change or grow your career to the next level of expertise. Or, if you have multiple ideas for your career, add them all.
15. ***Now look at your whole timeline and pick a retirement age - 45, 55, 65, 100 ... it's up to you.*** What activities would you like to do in retirement? Add those to your timeline.
16. ***Look at your overall timeline.*** Is there anything missing that you'd like to add?
17. ***Now that you've got a full timeline, count the years between leaving university and retirement.*** Write that number in the top corner of the page. How many years are you looking at? 30? 45? That's a LOT of time. Imagine choosing a career path at 21, and then changing your mind and starting something new at 41. How many years would you have left before you retire? That's STILL a lot of time.
18. ***Okay, now think of something that's really bugged you in the past few weeks – a mark, an argument with a parent or friend, maybe getting grounded for something - and pretend you're thirty.*** How much will this same thing bother you then? Will you even remember it?

**Big messages for today:**

*First:* You have a lot of time to decide who you are and what you want to do with your life. There's a lot of room to explore new adventures and to discover new things about yourself. You do need to stay in action, but don't feel as though you have to decide everything before you leave high school. Things will change. You'll learn more about yourself and you'll gather important insights that you can't possibly know right now. How you feel about your life will change. Maybe everything on this timeline will change!

*Second:* That being said, even though things may change, setting intentions (the ideas on your timeline) helps guide you forward. Thinking about what you might want one day can help you figure out when you might need to make decisions, e.g. planning ahead for that solo trip.

So keep your timeline, tuck it away, and know that you can revisit it or redo it anytime.

# Guiding Principles of Career Development

## Guiding Principles of Career Development



THE WORD "CAREER" COMES FROM THE LATIN FOR CART OR CHARIOT (CARRUS), A MEANS TO CARRY YOU FROM ONE POINT TO ANOTHER. A CAREER IS ABOUT THE LIFE YOU WANT TO LEAD – NOT JUST A JOB, OCCUPATION OR PROFESSION. IT INVOLVES DECIDING AMONG POSSIBLE AND PREFERRED FUTURES. IT ANSWERS: "WHO DO I WANT TO BE IN THE WORLD?," "WHAT KIND OF LIFESTYLE AM I SEEKING?" AND "HOW CAN I MAKE AN IMPACT?"

AS CANADIANS, WE LIKE THE METAPHOR OF A CANOE TO REPRESENT OUR CAREERS – WE USE IT ON OUR JOURNEY, WE STOCK IT WITH THE TOOLS WE NEED, AND WE PROACTIVELY STEER IT TO OUR DESTINATION; SOMETIMES WE FACE RAPIDS, AND AS CONDITIONS CHANGE SO MIGHT OUR COURSE.



### PURPOSE

THIS DOCUMENT IS INTENDED TO BRING GREATER CLARITY AND CONSISTENCY TO OUR NATIONAL CONVERSATIONS ABOUT CAREER DEVELOPMENT. THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES UNDERPIN CERIC'S VISION TO INCREASE THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL WEALTH OF CANADIANS THROUGH CAREER COUNSELLING AND CAREER EDUCATION. THEY ARE A STARTING POINT TO INFORM DISCUSSIONS WITH CLIENTS, EMPLOYERS, FUNDERS, POLICY-MAKERS, FAMILIES AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS, AND A BASIS FOR COLLABORATION.

### BENEFITS

RESEARCH SHOWS CAREER DEVELOPMENT IS ASSOCIATED WITH MANY EDUCATIONAL, SOCIETAL AND FINANCIAL BENEFITS. INDIVIDUALS REALIZE GREATER WELL-BEING AND SATISFACTION IN LIFE. SCHOOLS LIFT STUDENT SUCCESS AND GRADUATION RATES. ORGANIZATIONS FILL SKILLS GAPS AND IMPROVE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND PRODUCTIVITY. GOVERNMENTS REDUCE UNEMPLOYMENT, BOOST SOCIAL MOBILITY AND STRENGTHEN ECONOMIC GROWTH. AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF AN INCREASINGLY FREELANCE ECONOMY AND THE RAPIDLY SHIFTING NATURE OF WORK, CAREER DEVELOPMENT MATTERS MORE THAN EVER.



## 8 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

CAREER DEVELOPMENT...



- IS A LIFELONG PROCESS OF BLENDING AND MANAGING PAID AND UNPAID ACTIVITIES. LEARNING (EDUCATION), WORK (EMPLOYMENT, ENTREPRENEURSHIP), VOLUNTEERISM AND LEISURE TIME.
- ENTAILS DETERMINING INTERESTS, BELIEFS, VALUES, SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES – AND CONNECTING THOSE WITH MARKET NEEDS.
- SHOULD BE SELF-DIRECTED. AN INDIVIDUAL IS RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS OR HER OWN CAREER, BUT IS NOT ALONE – WE ALL INFLUENCE AND ARE INFLUENCED BY OUR ENVIRONMENT.
- INVOLVES UNDERSTANDING OPTIONS, NAVIGATING WITH PURPOSE AND MAKING INFORMED CHOICES.
- MEANS MAKING THE MOST OF TALENT AND POTENTIAL, HOWEVER YOU DEFINE GROWTH AND SUCCESS – NOT NECESSARILY LINEAR ADVANCEMENT.
- IS OFTEN SUPPORTED AND SHAPED BY EDUCATORS, FAMILY, PEERS, MANAGERS AND THE GREATER COMMUNITY.
- CAN BE COMPLEX AND COMPLICATED, SO CONTEXT IS KEY – THERE MAY BE BOTH INTERNAL CONSTRAINTS (FINANCIAL, CULTURAL, HEALTH) OR EXTERNAL CONSTRAINTS (LABOUR MARKET, TECHNOLOGY).
- IS DYNAMIC, EVOLVING AND REQUIRES CONTINUOUS ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE THROUGH MULTIPLE TRANSITIONS.

THESE GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT REFLECT MULTIPLE VOICES FROM CERIC.



[ceric.ca/principles](http://ceric.ca/principles)

# CERIC further resources: Where can I find more information?

We have provided a basic overview of circumstances you may encounter when working with youth, as well as some accessible discussion questions and activities. At this point, you may wish to go deeper, and to gather more information. The CERIC website contains a rich array of career development resources:

- For information specific to working with youth, check out the following resource bibliography: **<https://ceric.ca/wpdm-package/youth-and-career-development/>**
- CareerWise by CERIC is an ongoing initiative that provides up-to-date career related news and information. Visit **<https://careerwise.ceric.ca/>** to subscribe, browse, or conduct a site search on “youth,” “transition,” etc.
- For additional information that is primarily research based, try a similar search through the Canadian Journal of Career Development archives: **<http://cjcdonline.ca/>**
- CERIC’s publications page features a wide range of resources pertaining to career development theory and practice: **<https://ceric.ca/publications/>**

# About the authors



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Karen Schaffer is the author of three books on careers (*Hire Power*, *The Job of Your Life*, and *The Complete Book of Resumes*) and writes screenplays in her spare time. She has been a Career Counsellor for over 20 years, for the last 10 at Saint Mary's University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and is currently doing narrative research in the career development field. Karen holds an MA in Counselling Psychology from the Adler School.



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