



Work & Career



Exercise



45 min



Client



No

Career Discovery Reflection

Knowledge gained through self-reflection is an essential part of career exploration and discovery. Self-knowledge - the information one possesses about oneself [1] - helps individuals take stock of their experiences, identify what matters most when considering a career, and make informed work-related decisions [2]. Indeed, a chronicle of experiences that can be re-read from time to time is within us all [3]. Reflecting on this internal book of experiences and knowledge can help individuals uncover the common and repeating threads and patterns that may orient them towards a particular career.

People who understand their internal compass - their interests, values, and abilities - tend to feel more confident about using their true selves as a guide and are likely to feel optimistic and satisfied with their decisions [4]. Conversely, people with low self-knowledge may question their ability to make optimal decisions and feel unsatisfied with their choices [4].

Career exploration and discovery activities effectively aid self-reflection, bolster a sense of control, and increase confidence in career-related decisions [5]. Further, knowledge acquisition through self-reflection is positively associated with goal setting, effective career strategies, improved career decision-making [6], and career orientations that fit one's traits, preferences, and goals [1].

This exercise will help individuals identify the common themes and patterns present in their life that may orient them toward particular careers. Through answering a series of questions, participants will embark on a journey of career and self-exploration that will help them uncover the qualities they wish to embody in their work-life.



Author

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Goal

This exercise aims to help participants identify the common and repeating threads and patterns in their life that may orient them toward particular careers. Through answering a series of questions that prompt career and self-exploration, individuals will understand themselves better and uncover the qualities they wish to embody in their work-life.



Advice

- Participants should be given ample time to complete all questions included in this exercise. Invite participants to answer a few at a time and, if necessary, take breaks if they lose focus or become disinterested in the process.
- Participants should be encouraged to consider each question in-depth and answer honestly. There are no right or wrong answers.
- While writing just a few words may be tempting, participants should be encouraged to write a few thoughtful sentences for each response to ensure all relevant details are included and uncover repeating patterns in their answers.
- Participants might find that certain elements of their responses to different questions are repeated. Common threads in responses should not be ignored, and identifying these patterns is integral to the exercise.



References

1. Morin, A., & Racy, F. (2021). Dynamic self-processes. In J. Rauthmann (Ed.), *The handbook of personality dynamics and processes* (pp. 336-386). Elsevier Publishing.
2. Özek, H., & Ferraris, A. (2018). The role of self-awareness and self-efficacy on career decision-making: An innovative perspective. In *Innovation and capacity building* (pp. 207-229). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
3. Foucault, M. 2005. *The hermeneutics of the subject: Lectures at the College de France 1981-1982*. Palgrave MacMillan.
4. Schlegel, R. J., Hicks, J. A., Davis, W. E., Hirsch, K. A., & Smith, C. M. (2013). The dynamic interplay between perceived true self-knowledge and decision satisfaction. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 104, 542.
5. Zhao, F., Li, P., Chen, S., & Qin, J. (2022). Career exploration and career decision self-efficacy in northwest Chinese preservice kindergarten teachers: The mediating role of work volition and career adaptability. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 5591.
6. Anakwe, U. P., Hall, J. C., & Schor, S. M. (2000). Knowledge-related skills and effective career management. *International Journal of Manpower*, 21, 566-579.



Career Discovery Reflection

Career choices are among the most important decisions that people make. To make choices that are right for you, it is important to understand what drives you, fulfills you, and allows you to thrive. In short, the more you understand yourself and your unique interests, values, skills, and experiences, the more you understand what you want and need from your work-life.

An effective way to gain this knowledge and understanding is through self-reflection. Self-reflection will help you become more familiar with your inner self - your thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and motivations.

This exercise will help you practice self-reflection to discover more about yourself and what you want from your career. The questions included in this exercise are designed to help you uncover repeated themes, patterns, and qualities that run through your life. Recognizing these common threads will help you identify what you want from your work-life, and it may even point you toward careers you have not previously considered.

Step 1: Career Discovery Reflection Questions

Below you will find a selection of questions related to work, hobbies, interests, past experiences, and future aspirations.

Take your time to read and answer each question honestly, clearly, and in detail. You should attempt to write at least 2-3 sentences for each response. If you need to take a break, stop the exercise and return to the remaining questions later.

Do not worry if your responses to different questions are repeated. This is an important part of the exercise that will help you uncover the patterns in your answers and clarify what you want more of and less of in your career.

Career Discovery Reflection Questions

Set 1: Past Career Dreams

This first set of questions will help you explore your past career hopes and dreams. Remember, the more detailed your responses, the easier it will be to uncover repeated patterns and common themes in your answers.



1. When you were younger, what did you want to be when you grew up? Consider this from as far back as you can remember and write down as much detail as possible, even if it seems unimportant or silly.

When I was a child, I wanted to:

2. What attracted you to these careers or occupations?

I was attracted to these careers because:

3. Knowing what you know now, which careers - or parts of them - are still:

a) Attractive?



b) Unattractive?

Set 2: Work Review

The following questions will help you carry out a work review. Take your time to read and answer each question honestly, clearly, and in detail.

4. Of the careers mentioned above, what aspects (good and bad) do you have in your work:

a) Currently?

b) In past roles?



5. How do you currently enjoy yourself at work?

6. If you won the lottery and could choose to be or do anything, what would you be and what would you do with your time?

If I won the lottery, I would:

7. In as much detail as possible, what attracts you to the activities you described in the previous question?



Set 3: Hobbies & Interests

The following questions will help you explore your hobbies and interests. Remember, take your time to read each question and try to write at least 2-3 sentences for each response.

8. What hobbies or interests have you had in the past (from the earliest to date)?

I remember:

9. What hobbies or interests do you currently have?

My current hobbies and interests are:

10. What hobbies or interests would you take up if you had more:

a) Time?



b) Money?

c) Freedom?

11. What makes these hobbies and interests so appealing to you?



Set 4: Preferred People & Qualities

These questions will help you explore the kinds of people and qualities you find most appealing. Take your time to read and answer each question. If you would like to take a break, feel free to do so and return to the remaining questions later.

12. Who have you, or do you, really like working with?

I really love(d) working with:

13. What qualities do these people have?

14. Where might you find people with these qualities?



15. Which of *your* qualities do you most enjoy using?

I most enjoy using:

Set 5: Current Hopes & Dreams

This final set of questions will help you explore your current hopes, dreams, and aspirations.

16. What is something you have given up on in your life?

Something I have given up on is:

17. What is your dream?

My dream is to:



18. What do you want the rest of your life to be about?

I want the rest of my life to be about:

19. Deep down (if there were NO obstacles whatsoever), what do you *really* want from your work life?

Deep down, I want:

20. What do you want to be doing with your life in 10 years? In 15 years? In 20 years?

In 10 years, I want to be:



In 15 years, I want to be:

In 20 years, I want to be:

Step 2: Identifying Common Threads

In this step, you will take some time to reflect on your answers and look for common threads or patterns.

These might include qualities you find appealing in people or values you appreciate. Perhaps your responses show an inclination towards a particular profession, a long-forgotten interest, or a desire to surround yourself with people who are honest and authentic. There might be persistent themes related to helping others, a need for more challenges, or things you want more (or less) of in your career.

Take some time to read your responses, think about what you have written, and look for recurring words, qualities, themes, and patterns.

From your responses in step 1, what threads, themes, qualities, and patterns are repeated? Write these down in the space below.



Step 3: Reflecting on the Common Threads

Now that you have identified common themes and repeated patterns in your answers, it is time to reflect on them and clarify what you want for your work-life and career.

Take some time to consider the following questions and write your responses in the spaces provided.

What themes or patterns show up most often for you?

What possible careers or professions do these patterns point to?



What qualities do you want to build into your work-life?

A large, empty rectangular box with a light gray background, intended for the user to write their response to the question about qualities to build into their work-life.

What do you want more of in your career?

A large, empty rectangular box with a light gray background, intended for the user to write their response to the question about what they want more of in their career.

What do you want less of in your career?

A large, empty rectangular box with a light gray background, intended for the user to write their response to the question about what they want less of in their career.



Step 4: General Reflection Questions

- How was it to complete this exercise?
- What did you find most rewarding about this exercise?
- What is the most valuable insight you have gained from this exercise?
- Were you surprised by any of the recurring themes in your responses? If so, what?
- What small steps can you take to include more of your recurring themes, patterns, and qualities in your professional life?