

Article 1 (5 Part Series):**HOW TO BECOME WHAT YOU WANT TO BE WHEN YOU GROW UP:
A Beginner's Guide to Career Exploration and Planning**

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Hi! I'm Nicole Stroobants, Oneida Higher Education (OHE) Advisor. I just turned 29 years young and have been with the Higher Education department a little over 3 years now, but if you ask Mitch Metoxen, the Assistant Manager, he will tell you it seems like I just started yesterday! Haha! I earned a Bachelor's in Community Education and a Master's in Administrative Leadership with an emphasis in Higher Education, both from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. I absolutely LOVED my collegiate experience there, which was funded primarily through the OHE grant. Now, I am grateful to give something back to the tribe utilizing the knowledge and skill sets I gained through my own higher education. I am a firm believer that pursuing higher education can change your life for the better if you "know how to play the game."

Along the lines of "knowing how to play the game" when chasing your educational and career goals, the first article in this 5 part series is designed to help you determine how to pick a quality career path that fits you (the remaining 4 articles will be available in the coming months)! Many times we hear clients here at Oneida Higher Ed say "I want to go back to school, but I'm not sure what for." Does this sound like something you might say? In this article I will introduce a few simple steps you can take to start off on the right track and provide you with a few internet hyperlinks of additional resources. These steps are:

- 1) Develop an Integrated Life Plan (ILP)**
- 2) Take a Career Assessment or Two!**

- 3) **Research your Career/Education Path**
- 4) **Know your Personal Limitations**

STEP (1) DEVELOP AN INTERGRATED LIFE PLAN (ILP):

Just Who the Heck are You, Anyway, and Why are You Here?!

When considering a potential career path it is important to think about all of your needs and aspirations in addition to all the important roles that you play in your own little world. Examples of some of the roles you might play would be mother, artist, brother, mechanic, or the neighborhood Betty (nosey neighbor)...just kidding! **Integrative Life Planning (ILP)** is a newer approach to career planning developed by Dr. Sally Hansen that attempts to assist you in looking at the “bigger picture” when it comes to who you are. Additionally, it helps you reflect on what’s important to you as well as how you can contribute to society as a whole. This more holistic approach to career planning asks you to visualize yourself as a “quilt” made up of many different patches all connected to one another. The idea behind this theory is that if you develop a deep understanding of yourself and how you can impact society, you will be happier in the career path you choose because you will feel as though you are able to fulfill your overall purpose in life and meet your own individual needs at the same time. For example, rather than “planning for work” you will “plan for life roles and how they relate to one another” and instead of “expecting stability” you learn to “expect and manage change and transitions in both family and work.” If you take the time to evaluate how your actions can make you happy, as well as how you can improve your community in the process, you should have a greater sense of satisfaction when you do find the right career path for you.

(To learn more about ILP visit:

<http://www.library.wisc.edu/edvrc/docs/public/pdfs/LIReadings/LifePlanning.pdf>)

STEP (2) TAKING A CAREER ASSESSMENT OR TWO:

Discovering your Career Interests

Once you established a good sense of who you are and your roles in society, the next step is starting to think about what you want to be when you grow up! A great tool to help get started in figuring out what career path might fit you best is a **Career Assessment**. Not to be confused, a Career Assessment is not a test because you are not graded on it; it is an instrument that helps you evaluate your skills, interests, personality and values so that you can figure out where you would “best fit” in the workforce. Even if you think you have a general idea of what career field you may want to go into, a Career Assessment can be a fun and useful tool to help make sure the job fits you. Career Assessments can be found online, at your school, local library, or local job center. The more assessments you take, the more solid a picture you can paint of the vocational areas that might work for you. Here, at Oneida Higher Education, we offer two free career assessments to our clients. The first assessment is called the **World of Work Inventory (WOWI)**. The WOWI is based on the following main assumptions:

- “Just because someone is good at something, does not mean that he/she will like doing it.
- Just because someone likes something, does not mean she/he is good at it.
- Just because someone likes something and is good at it, does not mean he/she has the appropriate “Work-style” or temperament for doing it”

We also offer a few assessments that analyze your Interests, Skills, and Values related to choosing a career path through **WisCareers**. WisCareers is an extremely helpful online tool with various career related resources including information on career planning,

budgeting, job seeking, education, and occupations. You will find more details about other ways in which you can benefit from utilizing WiscCareers aside from the assessments later in this article and in future articles in this series as well. In order to fully access the WOWI or WISCareers our department will need to create an account for you, so please contact us if you are interested in using either of these tools.

(To learn more about the WOWI or WISCareers contact our office or visit www.wowi.com and <http://wiscareers.wisc.edu/Default.asp>)

STEP (3) RESEARCH YOUR CAREER/EDUCATION PATH:

How to Get From Point “A” to Point “B”

Regardless of what point you are at in your life, whether you are a middle school student or an adult, it's important to gather background knowledge about the various career paths you may be interested in as soon as you can. After you have narrowed down your interests you should begin researching the occupation and the educational path you need to take to be successful in each field. There are TONS of resources available to do this including the internet, libraries, job centers, magazines, books, documentaries, and more! Some of the basic areas you should investigate are: salary, education path, employability in the area and across the country, and typical daily activities that you would need to execute. One great tool to help you explore these areas is the WISCareers site mentioned in the previous section of this article. You could also seek out a mentor, career counselor, or guidance counselor (if you are in high school) to help you with this process if you feel a little overwhelmed or you're not sure where to start.

Another helpful resource for youth is the KnowHow2Go Wisconsin website. This site provides career exploration tips along with steps students can take to help them

prepare for college (those steps will be addressed later in this series). (Learn more about KnowHow2Go Wisconsin at <http://www.knowhow2gowisconsin.org/>)

An excellent way to get a glimpse into what working in the career is really like is to conduct an **Informational Interview**. An informational interview is when you ask 10-15 educated questions about the job to a professional in the field. It usually takes about 30 minutes to conduct and is an excellent way to network with potential employers. (Learn more about Informational Interviews by visiting:

http://www.quintcareers.com/informational_interviewing.html)

Another even more effective way to learn about a career is to **Job Shadow**. Job shadowing is when you get to actually visit the job site of the professional and watch them perform their organizational duties. You may even get to assist the professional in completing job related tasks, but may be limited in what you can do due to privacy and legality issues. (Learn more about Job Shadowing from

http://www.quintcareers.com/job_shadowing.html)

Of course, the best way to learn about the job would be hands-on experience. If you are a current student, try to search out **Internships** or **Externships**. These opportunities provide invaluable direct experience in the field that can not only help you decide whether or not the career is a good fit for you, but can also help to build some networks and experience you can tap into when you are ready to step into the professional field. More information about how you can benefit from internships in a future article in this series.

STEP (4) KNOWING YOUR PERSONAL LIMITATIONS:

Can I Do the Job?

An important area that is often overlooked when individuals are exploring a career is whether or not you have any **limitations** that might prevent you from being successful in the career. Here are a few things you need to consider that might prevent you from landing that dream job:

Common Limitations:

- **Physical Health** (Do you have any disabilities, mental health issues, chronic illnesses, etc.? Though some of these areas are protected by discrimination laws, you may still find limitations in tasks you are able to accomplish)
- **Criminal Background** (Many jobs require a thorough background check prior to employment and mandate that you have and maintain a clean record.)
- **Resource Availability** (Do you have reliable transportation, daycare, internet access, etc.?)
- **Schedule Flexibility** (Do you have young children or other commitments?)
- **Educational Background and Skills** (Consider your strengths and weaknesses in your knowledge and abilities. For example, you may not be successful at becoming a doctor if you do not excel in Science and your grades are poor. It is important to recognize that either by choice or ability that college is not for everyone, so be sure to understand the educational requirements of your field of interest prior to starting down a vocational path.)
- **Location** (If you are not willing or able to relocate, make sure there are plenty of jobs available in your chosen field in your area **BEFORE** you pursue the career.)

Though it's not fun to think about reasons why you may not be able to accomplish your dreams, it is important for you to be realistic when you set both educational and vocational goals.

CONCLUSION

Starting a new career can be an exciting, life changing experience filled with adventure, learning opportunities, and new friends, IF you know how to make good choices. The staff at Oneida Higher Education and I are happy to assist you in taking steps in the right direction. In fact, we are all in the field of Higher Education because we are passionate about helping people like you accomplish your educational and career

goals. If you have any questions regarding choosing the right career or would like to utilize our services, please contact us by phone (920) 869-4033 or email highered@oneidation.org. Look forward to reading more articles in this series! We hope that you find them helpful. Thanks for reading and HAPPY CAREER PLANNING!

Next article topic: PREPARING FOR COLLEGE

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