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Published by:

Canada Career Counselling

Website: canadacareercounselling.com

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Chapter 1: Introduction & Overview of the Career Planning Process

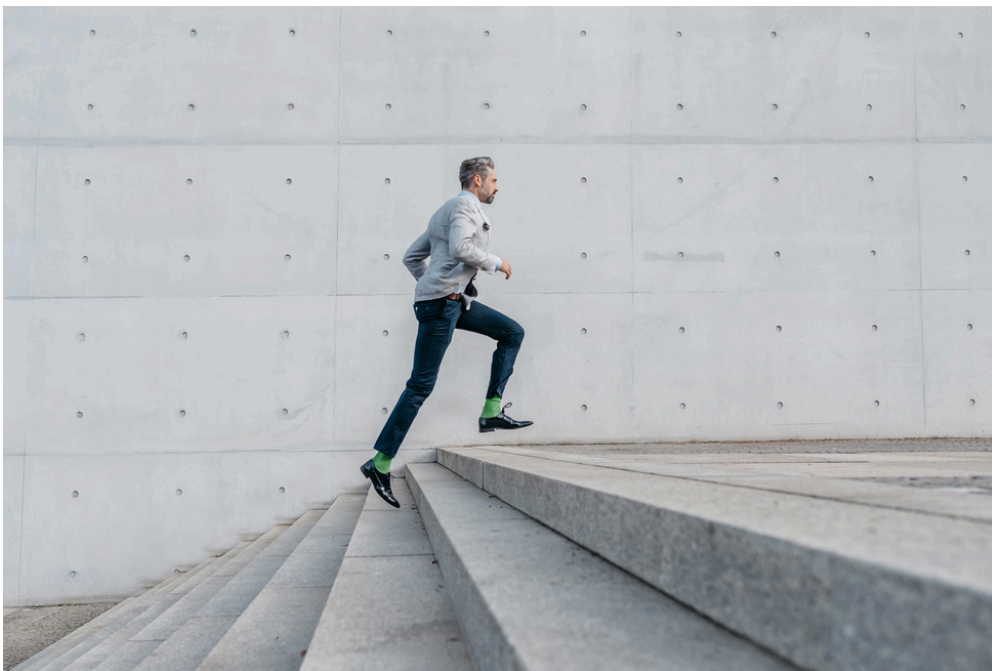
Welcome!

Welcome to Canada Career Counselling! Congratulations on getting started on this life changing process. By deciding to pursue career counselling, you are making an important investment towards building more fulfillment in your career and life.

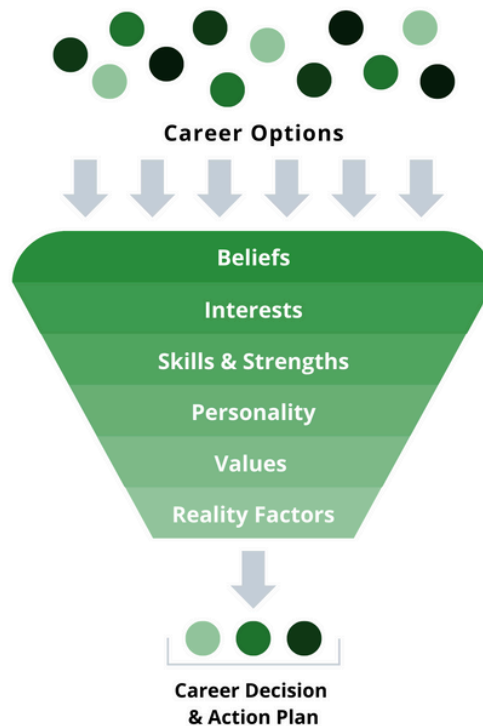
When our clients first come to us, many of them feel stuck. If you are in the same boat, you might be:

- Feeling frustrated at the thought of staying in your current career.
- Facing a career transition because of a major change in your life and feeling overwhelmed when thinking about everything that might need to happen to change careers.
- Unsure about whether you can change careers or worried you might make the wrong decision.
- Discouraged after looking through job advertisements for career ideas and not finding anything of interest.
- Overwhelmed by the number of career options out there and confused about where to start in finding your next career direction.

During the career counselling process, your counsellor will help you manage these concerns and, at the same time, help you to make a strategic and informed career decision and action plan so that you feel confident about what's next!



Career Counselling Process at a Glance



The Career Counselling Process at a Glance diagram shows what you will be working on with your career counsellor. Your counsellor will first help you to figure out different factors about yourself that impact career fit. These factors include your beliefs, interests, skills and strengths, personality, values, and any reality factors you are facing. As you work with your counsellor to identify and clarify these factors, you will also come up with ideas about different career options that best suit your needs.

The focus of career counselling will then switch to finding out about different careers. Your counsellor will point you to resources to do your career research. Doing online career research is essential and will help you to narrow down your career options to a few top contenders. Another important resource is the professionals who are already working in the careers that interest you. This important step will help you to gain a deeper understanding of the fit of these careers to who you are.

Towards the later phases of career counselling, your counsellor will support you as you take all the information you have gathered from your research and as you make an informed career decision.

As you can see in the Career Counselling Process at a Glance diagram, the career counselling process is like pouring all the career options you come up with through a filter of layers that make up who you are. We will explore more about the career counselling process in detail as we move through this workbook!

Career Criteria Summary

To help keep track of what you learn about yourself while going through this workbook with your counsellor, you will record and keep track of relevant information in the **Career Criteria Summary**.

The Career Criteria Summary can be found at the end of this workbook, on page 182

These summary pages will be used as a place to easily reference your progress throughout the career counselling process, which will include any beliefs, skills, and strengths you identify, relevant assessment results, career and life values to remember, as well as reality factors to consider. There will also be a place to note any new or ongoing career considerations, as they come up.

Throughout the workbook, you will see check points and reminders to reference or update your Career Criteria Summary. This will help you as you explore and compare how each career you are considering aligns with what you've learned about yourself through the process.



As a resource, you can review an example Career Criteria Summary in Chapter 9 of this workbook, which should help you in completing your own version. If you would like to download the Career Criteria Summary pages as a separate document, they can be found and downloaded on the same webpage where you accessed this workbook.

Setting Expectations

There are a few important points to mention as you get started with career counselling:

1. Career counselling is not a process where the counsellor makes the career decision for you. Instead, this is a process where your career counsellor helps you to make the best decision for *yourself*.

At the end of the day, you are the expert on yourself. Your career counsellor will assist you and help you to ask yourself the right questions to support effective decision-making.

2. Based on what you discuss with your counsellor, they will choose the most appropriate and relevant assessment tools for you. It is important to remember that assessment tools are not Magic 8 Balls. While each assessment tool can help you to learn more about yourself on a particular psychological factor that matters for career fit, no one assessment tool will show the whole picture of who you are.

Each assessment tool only showcases one small piece of who you are. Relying only on assessment tools will not lead to a well-informed career decision. Relying on assessment tools *in combination* with your reflections, discussions with your counsellor, career research, and conversations with our job search advisors will lead to a well-informed career decision.

3. The process will require significant commitment and participation on your part. Engaging in your counselling sessions and completing the required homework after each session is essential and allows you to maximize discussions with your counsellor.

You can expect to commit a minimum of 2 - 4 hours of homework between sessions. Homework typically involves doing a few chapters from the career workbook, at times you will complete an additional assessment, and you will also be researching information about careers.

4. During sessions, you and your counsellor will discuss the potential careers you are considering.

You will also come up with career options through your homework, reflection, and conversations with other people between sessions.

5. With thousands of careers in existence, it is impossible for career counsellors to be experts on every profession, and this is one of the reasons why **information interviews** are integrated into our career counselling process.

It will be very important that you complete information interviews as part of your career research.

6. Lastly, it is important to set a timeline to maintain the momentum of the process. While 6 - 8 sessions over a period of 2 - 3 months is a typical timeline and the average number of sessions people need to make an effective decision, your specific circumstances will determine what will work best for you. You may want further assistance after you have finished with your career counselling process. When you launch your action plan, it can be helpful to work with our job search advisors for help with resumes, cover letters, interviews, and the job search so that you're able to put your career plan into action.

This is not a process to be rushed through, and for good reason. Attending regular sessions and completing the required homework will assist you in identifying and taking action towards your goals.



DEFINITION:

An **information interview** is a meeting between a person who wants to learn more about a career or industry and a person working in that career or industry.

Dos and Don'ts of Career Planning

DOs	DON'Ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take the time to make a good decision.• Be diligent with completing homework.• Base decisions on factual information.• Use a variety of resources to collect information.• Rely on scientifically validated psychometric assessments.• Talk to people in different careers.• Manage anxiety so that you can calmly reflect on yourself and on career options.• Keep an open mind with curiosity and creativity.• Be strategic by determining your career direction and then how to get there.• Obtain support and guidance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rush through the process.• Procrastinate.• Base decisions on hearsay or assumptions.• Rely on a single tool or test.• Rely on non-scientifically validated tests and quizzes on the internet.• Keep to yourself.• Let anxiety influence you to close off too quickly on an incomplete decision.• Find ways to judge your own career ideas prematurely.• Be tempted to rush into another career.• Keep your thoughts and feelings inside.

What is a Career?

A **career** is a series of related jobs, roles, or employment opportunities, both paid and unpaid, during which people strengthen and develop their skills, gain experience, and build connections.

Over time, as skills evolve, people tend to earn higher paying and more challenging opportunities. Careers typically involve increasing responsibilities, variety, and continual learning.

Here are some differences between careers and jobs:

	CAREERS	JOB
Description	Something a person wants to pursue and could be done in exchange for money	Activities that are done in exchange for a paycheck
Requirements	Usually require specialized education or training	May or may not require specialized training
Time	Usually long-term involvement for many years of a person's life	Usually short-term, though some people may work long-term for security
Tasks	Become increasingly challenging	Usually (but not necessarily) less challenging, more repetitive
Income	May or may not give the employee an income (i.e., volunteer positions)	Gives the employee an income
Path	Advancement/Change/Growth is possible	Usually little opportunity for growth

Why Career Planning is Important

Career planning is an investment in your career and your life. Taking the time to complete this process can have important benefits not only in your work life, but in your personal life as well.

Why is career planning important to you? What benefit do you think there will be to your work and/or life more generally by actively engaging in this process?:

Career planning is important for many reasons:

- It ensures that you carefully think through key factors about yourself that matter for career fit, and that you thoroughly research your career options.
- Be more fulfilled! People who are more fulfilled in their careers are often more fulfilled with their personal lives.
- If you are fulfilled in your career, you are likely to be more productive. Being more productive during your dedicated work time can also help you to maintain adequate work/life balance.
- It is helpful to break down the complexity of deciding what to do next in your career into manageable steps.
- It improves your mental health by reducing the stress and anxiety often associated with career indecision and transitions.
- It saves you time and money! Taking a strategic and informed approach in deciding what to do next in your career is more efficient and cheaper in the long run than doing it through trial and error.
- Career counselling increases self-awareness, which in turn can help you to confidently make decisions in all areas of life, not just your career.



REMEMBER:

Career development is a lifelong process; most people don't choose just one occupation for the rest of their lives!

People change occupations, develop new skills, gain additional training, move locations, change or acquire new values, might be caregivers, and a variety of other complexities that impact career paths.

The Myths and Realities of Career Planning

Myths about career planning can cause confusion and unhealthy comparisons to other people. We debunk some of the most common career myths below.

MYTH	REALITY
Career planning is about making one big decision.	Career development is a lifelong process. You will make many career decisions over the course of your life.
I can just take a test, and it will tell me what I should do.	Basing a decision on one piece of information or assessment is not sound decision making.
I need to find a career that satisfies all of my interests.	It is not always possible to satisfy all of your interests in your career. People often have diverse interests and can do activities outside of their work that contribute to their happiness.
My career should always be planned, and sequential.	It is impossible for you to control all aspects of your career.
Career is separate from other life roles.	Your career impacts and is impacted by other life roles (e.g., parent or partner). Career cannot be considered in isolation from these other life roles.
There is only one career that's suited to me.	Everyone has multi-career potential, which means there is more than one career you can enjoy and successfully pursue.
There is only one path for any given career.	Often, there are multiple paths to achieve the same career outcome.
Climbing the career ladder equals career success.	Career success is defined by you and your goals.

Let's Set Some Goals

To start, think about what has brought you to Canada Career Counselling and describe what it is that you are hoping to achieve from this process. Try to be as specific as you can, avoiding vague statements or outcomes (e.g., I want to have a job).

From this process, I would like to achieve:

To evaluate your progress in the process, as well as to keep you and your counsellor on track, think about how you will know you have accomplished what you have set out to achieve. What will be your measure(s) of success for your career planning process?

My measure(s) of success for this career planning process will be:

Checking in with your Emotions

It is normal to experience a range of emotions during career counselling. You may feel excited and hopeful one minute and stressed and anxious the next.

Emotions carry a lot of information about whether your needs and goals are being met, so it is important that you tune into them. Your counsellor will support you as you experience a range of emotions during career counselling.

Here are some feelings associated with career exploration. Which ones have you recently felt in relation to your career?

Select all that apply.

☐

Stuck

☐

Stressed

☐

Curious

☐

Eager

☐

Depressed

☐

Demotivated

☐

Nervous

☐

Excited

☐

Hopeless

☐

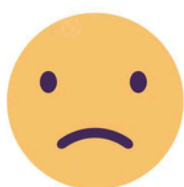
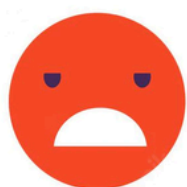
Lost

☐

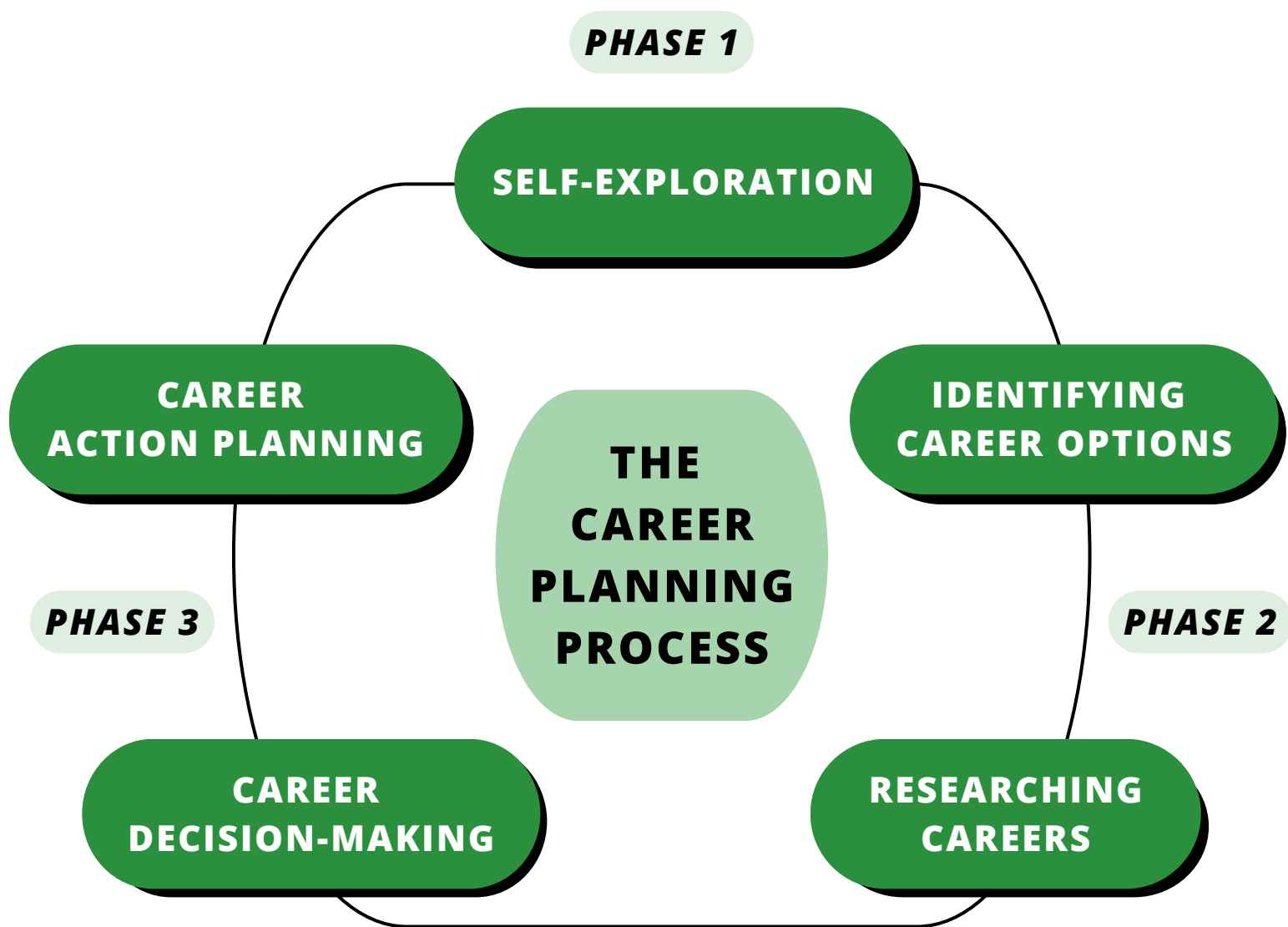
Confused

☐

Motivated



The Career Planning Process



If you look at the diagram above, there are **3 phases** that includes **5 main steps** you will be moving through in your career planning process.

Going through all 5 steps ensures that you are making a strategic and informed decision about your future career.

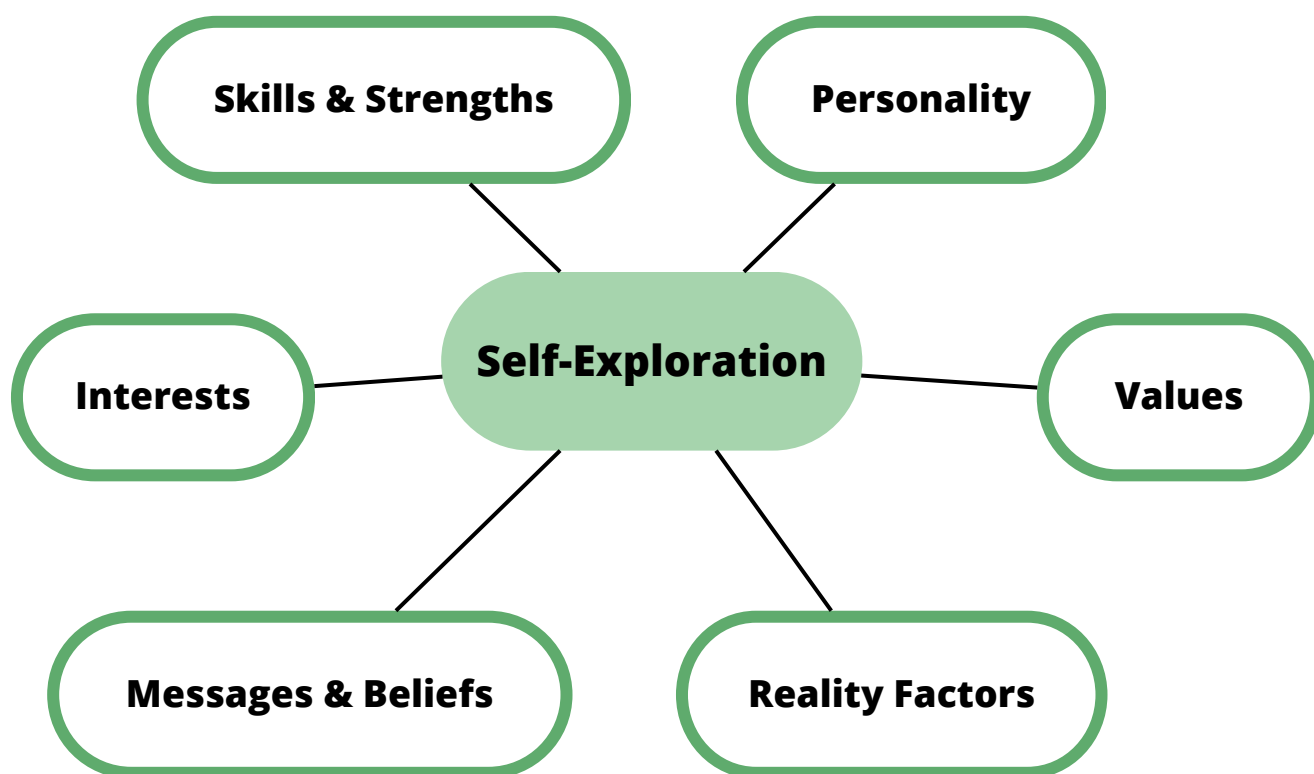
PHASE 1 – Understanding You

Phase 1 includes the first two steps, which involves self-exploration and identifying potential career options.

SELF-EXPLORATION

IDENTIFYING CAREER OPTIONS

You and your counsellor will discuss topics about you that you might not have considered before, so don't assume you should have all the answers. Outlined below are the self-exploration topics you and your counsellor will be discussing. Think of these topics as pieces of the puzzle of who you are.



Messages & Beliefs – Refers to direct and indirect messages you have received from family, peers, school, society in general etc., and beliefs you have internalized about careers. Sometimes what we believe about careers can hold us back from finding what makes us truly fulfilled.

Interests – Refers to what you enjoy learning about or doing.

Skills & Strengths - Refers to things you have learned through practice that you can do competently. Transferable skills are skills that can be used in more than one occupation. Job-specific or technical skills are skills relevant to a particular occupation.

Personality – Refers to your emotional, attitudinal, and behavioural patterns.

Values – Refers to what you consider to be important in your career or life.

Reality Factors – Refers to the current circumstances of your life that may impact your career.

Your counsellor will work with you to clarify the career criteria that matter to you about each of these areas through discussions, assessments, and reviewing exercises and activities. As these career criteria become clear, your counsellor will also work with you to brainstorm potential career options based on fit with these areas. When you identify the career criteria that matter to you about each these areas, and when those criteria are a part of your next career, you are much more likely to be fulfilled.



NOTE:

Career ideas may come from your own thinking, careers you saw on your assessment reports that sparked your curiosity, or ideas from other people!

PHASE 2 – Researching Careers

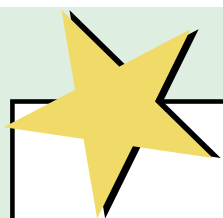
Once you explore your beliefs, interests, skills and strengths, personality, values, and reality factors, and several career options based on your self-understanding, you will begin to research career options. The goal of this phase is for you to carefully research each career option and how well it can fulfill the criteria you identified as important to you in Phase 1.

RESEARCHING CAREERS

You will research career options in several ways, including:

1. Completing online research to help you figure out at a high level to what extent each career option fits the factors about yourself that matter for career fit.
2. Conducting information interviews with people already working in occupations that most interest you.

The initial research looking at recommended websites will help you to get a big-picture sense of which career options are a stronger or weaker fit. Once you have about **three top career options** that interest you the most, you will conduct your information interviews by networking with people working in those careers to help you confirm or disconfirm that these career options are a good fit for you.



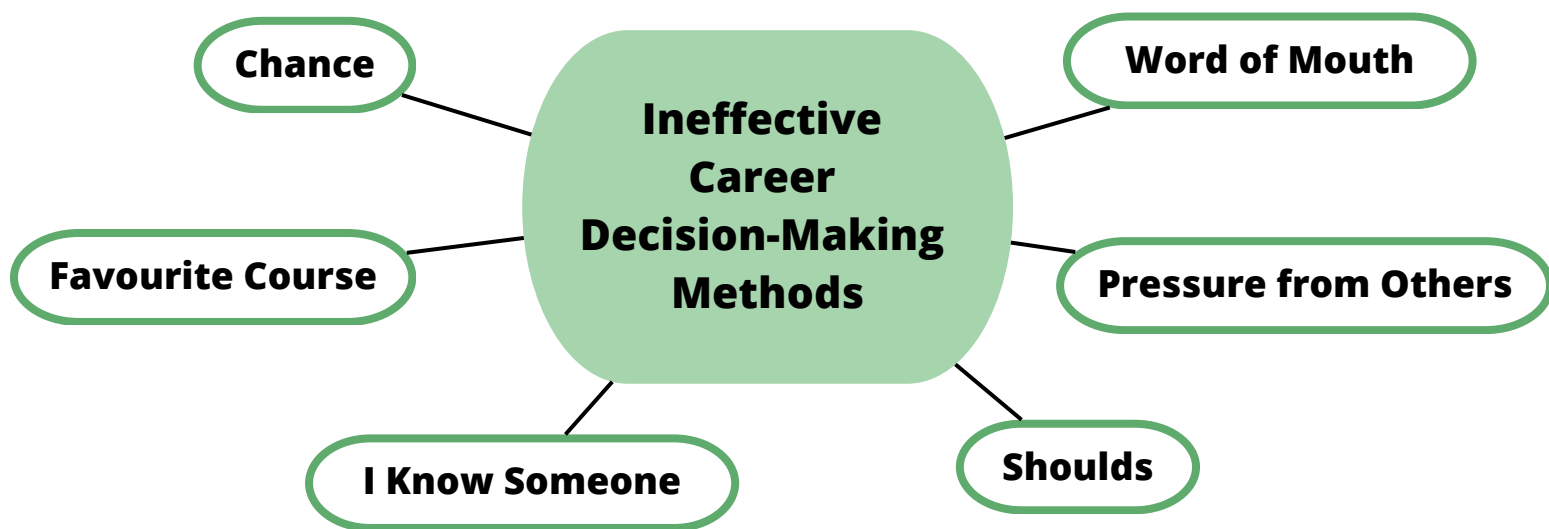
REMEMBER:

Be careful not to prematurely make a decision or rule out options based on assumptions!

People often make decisions based on what they think they know about a particular career as opposed to what the career actually is.

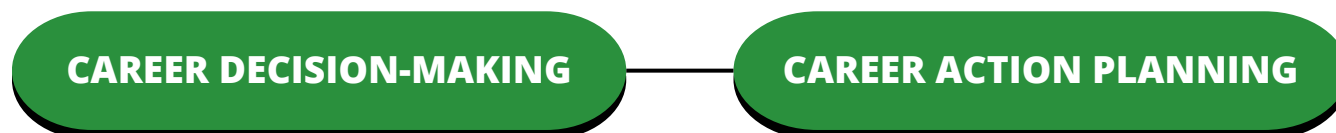
It is important to get the information you need, often from more than one source. People frequently underestimate how much information is required to make solid career decisions and, at times, rely on inadequate information or ineffective decision-making processes.

These are just a few examples of how career decisions are often made based on incomplete information that does not necessarily predict being fulfilled in your career!



PHASE 3 – Career Decision Making and Action Planning

Once you have learned more about yourself and the career options best suited to you, you will then need to make decisions and put an action plan into place.



As you work through these last two steps in more detail, you will clarify both your goal, and the actions needed to achieve it. This can be both an intimidating and exciting time but keep in mind that nothing changes if nothing changes!

You might decide you want or need additional support during this stage. Our job search advisors can help you with setting up a job search, so you can successfully put your career decision into action. This can include help with your resume, mock interviews, online job search and more. Remember to be open and honest about your thoughts and feelings with your counsellor during all stages of the process.

Making decisions and putting an action plan in place will help you in realizing your desired outcomes. If you have gathered enough information, engaged in the sessions, and completed the required homework, you will be well on your way to making an informed career decision.

REFLECTION:

Now that you know what the phases and steps are to making a strategic and informed career decision, what was different about the way you made career decisions in the past? Can you relate to having used any of the “ineffective career decision-making” methods for making past career decisions?