



# **EARLY CAREER PLANNING WORKBOOK**



CONNECTING THE PIECES  
**FOR YOUR IDEAL CAREER**

[canadacareercounselling.com](http://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 your future career and life fulfillment. We hope you commend yourself for knowing that you and your future are deserving of thoughtful consideration.

Our workbook has been developed for individuals who are early on in their career and life journeys. This includes high school students planning their ideal direction for post-secondary studies, as well as graduates determining what their next life chapter will look like.

If you have started a post-secondary program and decided it wasn't for you, exploring your learnings and self-insights from that experience can be helpful. You may have been working for a number of years and keep thinking about what career path to take. All of these situations are important reasons to engage in career counselling.



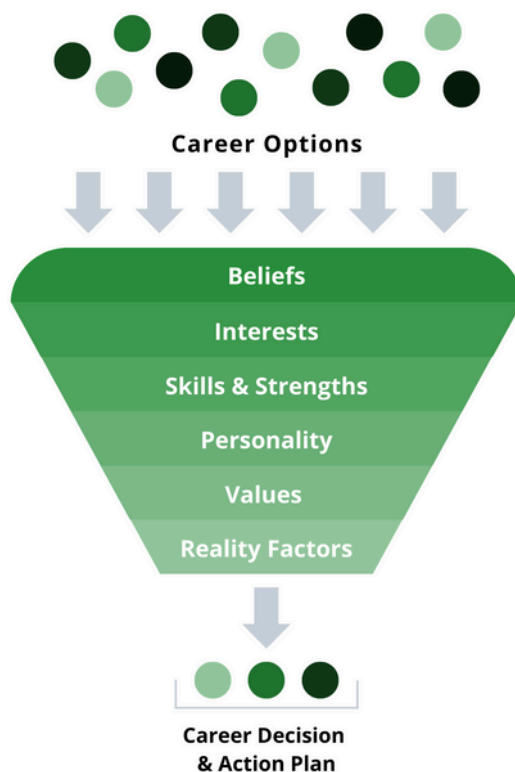
When our clients first come to us, many of them feel confused, not knowing where to start when it comes to defining their career direction. If you are in the same boat, you might be:

- Feeling overwhelmed by the amount of information available.
- Confused by suggestions made by others.
- Stressed by the number of options.
- Unsure about how to choose a career path
- Worried you'll make the wrong decision.
- Uneasy, witnessing others who are unfulfilled in their careers and wanting to avoid this.
- Feeling rushed or even pressured to "get started" in your professional life because others have enrolled in education and are working towards their career direction.



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

## CAREER FIT AT A GLANCE



**Career fit** is the measure of how well-suited a career is for you. The Career Fit diagram, above, shows an overview of the different factors that impact career fit. These factors include your beliefs, interests, skills and strengths, personality, values, and any reality factors you are facing.

Imagine a funnel made up of a number of filters. The goal is to see which careers will pass through the filters in your funnel. The more filters a career passes through (or factors a career aligns with), the stronger the career fit. In career counselling, you will work with your counsellor to:

- Gain insight about your filters (i.e., the factors impacting career fit)
- Determine which careers are a strong fit for you. (i.e., which careers will filter all the way through your funnel)

Learning how to assess career fit early in your career will not only be helpful now, but also as you continue to make decisions throughout your career journey.



## ASSESSING YOUR CAREER OPTIONS

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, which will help you figure out at a high level to what extent each career option fits the factors about yourself that matter for career fit. This research will help you to narrow down your career options to a few top contenders.

Another important resource for your career research is the professionals who are already working in the careers that interest you. Once you have narrowed down your career options to your top 3, your counsellor will guide you to conduct **information interviews** with people who are working in the fields you're considering.

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.

You will also work together to create a career action plan. This might include labour market research or scheduling a meeting with our job search advisors for help writing and revising your resume, creating a LinkedIn Profile, and more. For additional information about our job search advising services, please ask your counsellor.

As you can see in the Career Fit 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!



### 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.



unsplash.com/photos/6awfTPLGaCE



## 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**. Consider it to be like your backpack of unique factors as you go on your career exploration journey with your counsellor.



**These summary pages can be found at the end of the workbook!**



The summary pages will be used as a place to document and easily reference your progress as you travel through 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.



## WHAT TO EXPECT

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

1. Career counselling isn't 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.

Well-informed career decisions are based on having input from multiple sources of information!



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.



### DEFINITION:

An **assessment tool** is a scientifically validated psychometric tool, such as a questionnaire or an inventory, used by counsellors to measure, describe, and explain psychological concepts such as personality traits and to encourage self-insight.



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, conversations with our job search advisors, and career research will lead to a well-informed career decision.

Why use these over free tests online? Credibility! We can have faith they're measuring what they say they're measuring (valid) and do so consistently (reliable) because they're designed following clear scientific standards.

**3.** Your participation is an essential factor in arriving successfully to your decision destination. 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 exercises and readings to complete between sessions.

Homework typically involves doing a few chapters from the career workbook, researching information about careers, and at times you will complete an additional assessment tool.

**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. Please bring forward all of these ideas to your counsellor!



**5.** With thousands of careers in existence, it's 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 exploration. Don't worry, people enjoy talking about their careers and sharing what they know.

Your counsellor can also help you come up with strategies to help you prepare and feel confident in asking key questions.



**6.** Lastly, it is important to set a timeline to maintain the momentum of the process.

While 5 - 7 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.



DOS AND DON'TS OF CAREER PLANNING

DOs	DON'Ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Take the time to make a well-informed decision.</li><li>• Finish homework in a timely manner.</li><li>• Base decisions on factual information.</li><li>• Use a variety of resources to collect information.</li><li>• Rely on scientifically validated psychometric assessments tool, not free ones online.</li><li>• Talk to people in different careers.</li><li>• Manage anxiety so that you can calmly reflect on yourself and on career options.</li><li>• Keep an open mind with curiosity and creativity.</li><li>• Be deliberate - determine your ideal career direction first and then how to get there.</li><li>• Obtain support and guidance.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rush through the process.</li><li>• Procrastinate.</li><li>• Base decisions on hearsay or assumptions.</li><li>• Rely on a single tool or test.</li><li>• Keep to yourself.</li><li>• Let anxiety influence you to close off too quickly or make an incomplete decision.</li><li>• Find ways to judge your own career ideas prematurely.</li><li>• Be tempted to rush into choosing an educational program.</li><li>• Keep your thoughts and feelings inside.</li></ul>



# 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 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're fulfilled in your career, you're likely to be more productive. Being more productive during your dedicated work time can also help you to maintain adequate work/life balance.
- It's helpful to break down the complexities of determining your career path and plan how to get there through manageable steps.
- It improves your mental health by reducing the stress and anxiety often associated with career indecision or taking post-secondary courses that are a poor fit.
- It saves you time and money! Taking a strategic and informed approach in deciding how to start your career is more efficient and cheaper in the long run than doing it through trial and error or spending money on educational programs you don't finish.
- 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 and what careers “should look like” can cause confusion, stress, and lead to 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, or ask someone’s advice to find out what I should do.	Basing a decision on one piece of information or assessment tool isn’t sound decision making.
I need to find a career that satisfies all my interests.	It’s not always possible (or advisable) to satisfy all 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’s impossible for you to control all aspects of your career and it’s important to be open to incorporating life changes into your decisions.
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’s only one career that’s suited to me.	Everyone has multi-career potential, which means there’s 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 you're 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? Record your answer in the space below.

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



# CHECKING IN WITH YOUR EMOTIONS

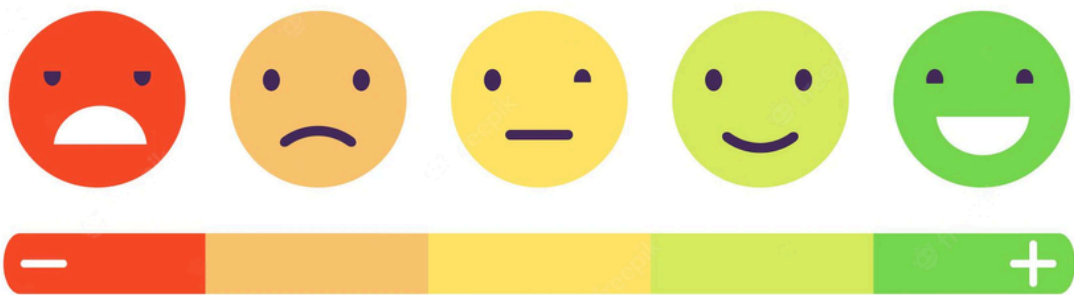
It's normal to experience a range of emotions as you consider your future and your career direction. You may feel excited and hopeful one minute and stressed and anxious the next.

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

Here are some common feelings associated with career exploration. Which ones have you recently felt when giving attention to your career future?

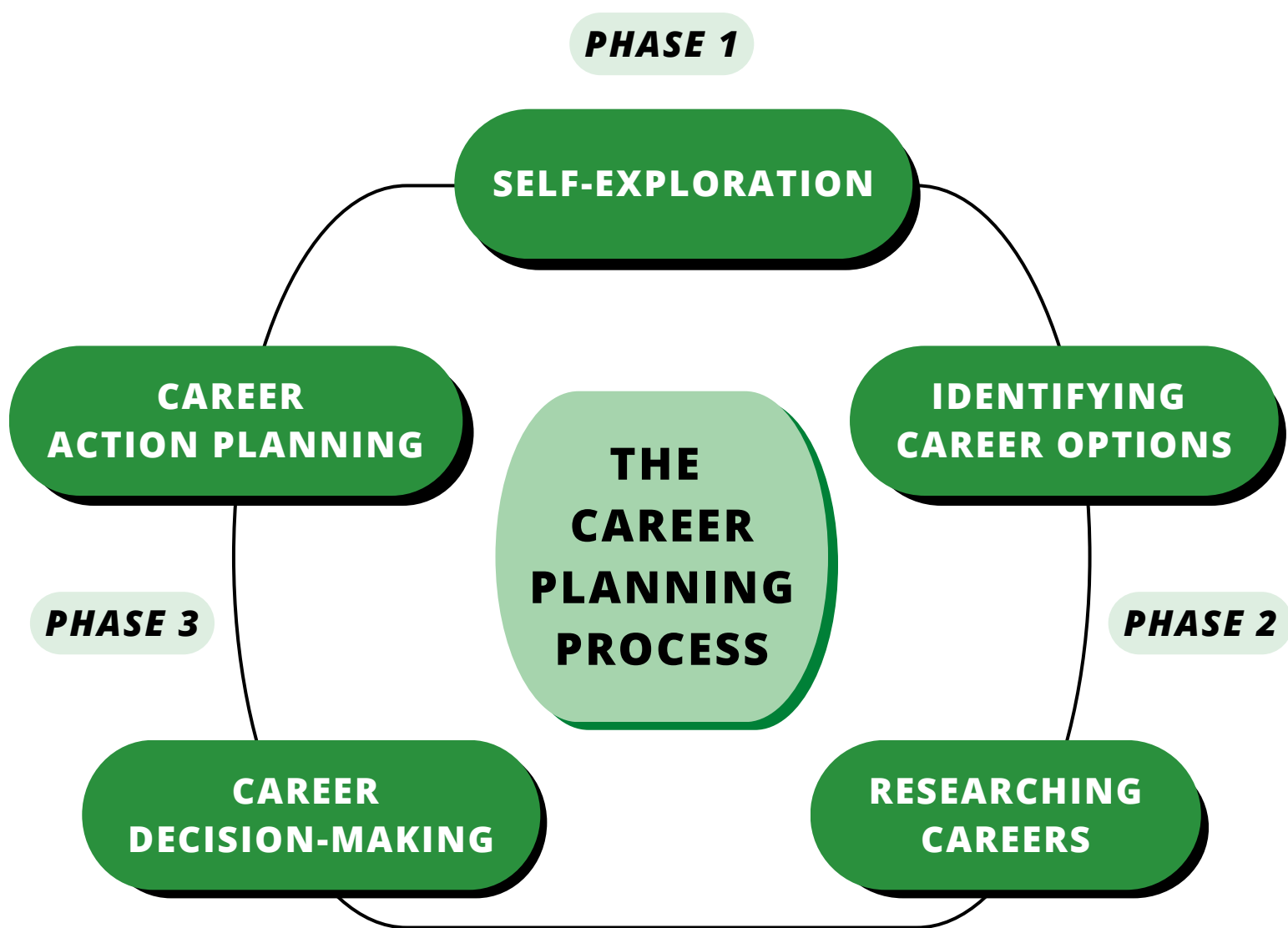
Select all that apply:

- |                                    |                                      |                                   |                                    |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stuck     | <input type="checkbox"/> Stressed    | <input type="checkbox"/> Curious  | <input type="checkbox"/> Eager     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Depressed | <input type="checkbox"/> Demotivated | <input type="checkbox"/> Nervous  | <input type="checkbox"/> Excited   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hopeless  | <input type="checkbox"/> Lost        | <input type="checkbox"/> Confused | <input type="checkbox"/> 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.



If there's something you aren't sure how to answer or approach, your counsellor will be happy to discuss this in your sessions.

You might also be encouraged to think about some topics between sessions or to re-visit topics in future sessions. Feel free to ask to re-visit a topic or bring up a topic you'd like to discuss!

#### 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!



What you see in the next section is an outline of the self-exploration topics you and your counsellor will be discussing. Each of these topics is very important to consider in making a career decision.

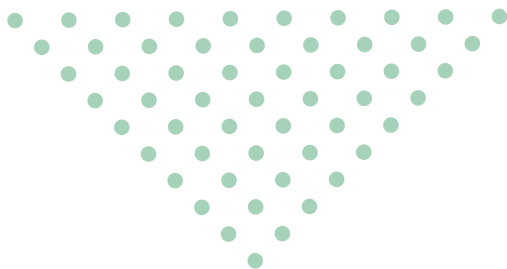


Think of these topics as pieces of the puzzle of who you are.

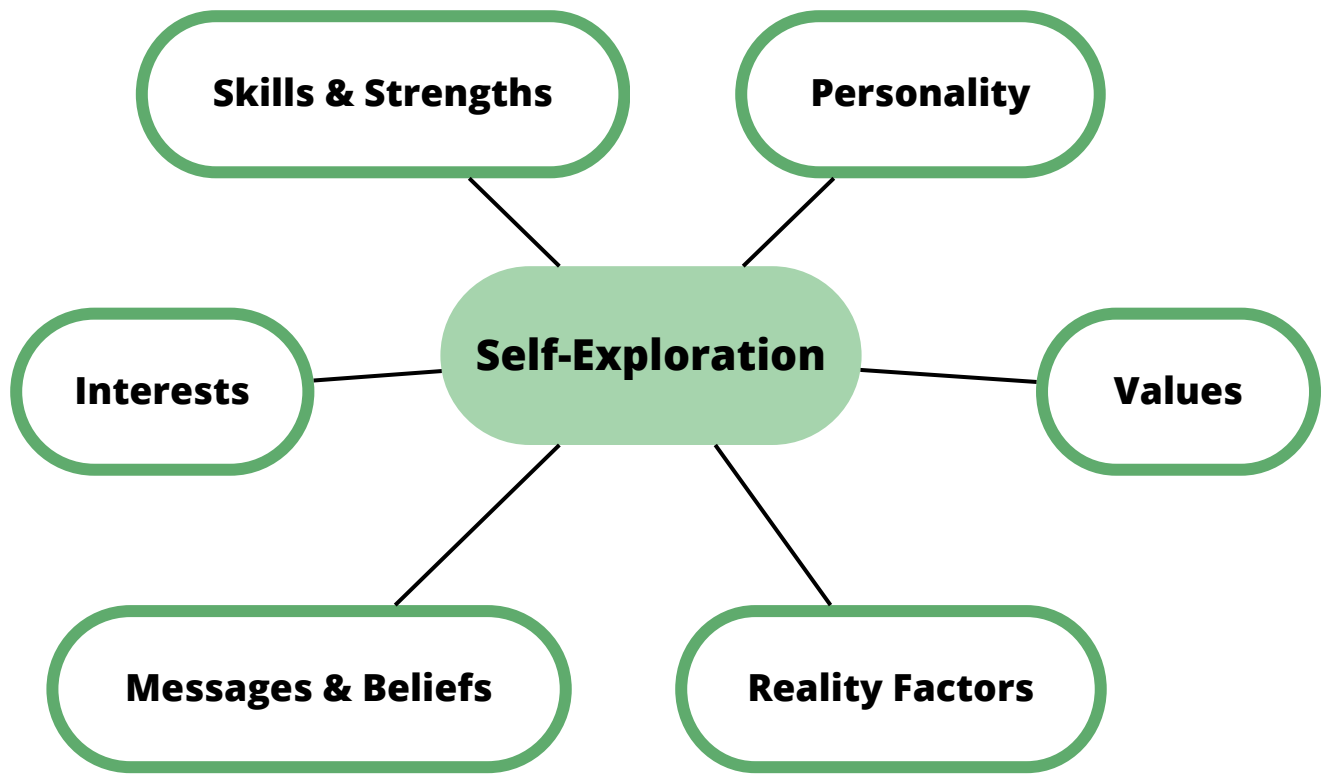
Identifying the career criteria that matter to you about each of these areas, and using those criteria to guide your career direction, will support your confidence in your choices and your fulfillment.

You'll work with your counsellor as a team to clarify your meaningful career criteria about each of these areas through discussions, assessments, and reviewing exercises and activities.

It's exciting as your career criteria start to unfold and become clear. You will also work together with your counsellor to ignite your curiosity and brainstorm potential career options.







**Messages & Beliefs** – Refers to direct and indirect messages you’ve received from family, peers, school, society in general etc. Messages impact our thinking and the kinds of assumptions we make about careers. Beliefs are messages 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 really well as well as what comes naturally easy to you. 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 behavioral patterns.

**Values** – Refers to what you consider to be important in your career or life. Values guide most of our life decisions and actions.

**Reality Factors** – Refers to the current circumstances of your life that may impact your career and the kinds of things you want to factor into your future (I.e., where to live, family planning, etc.)



## PHASE 2 – RESEARCHING CAREERS

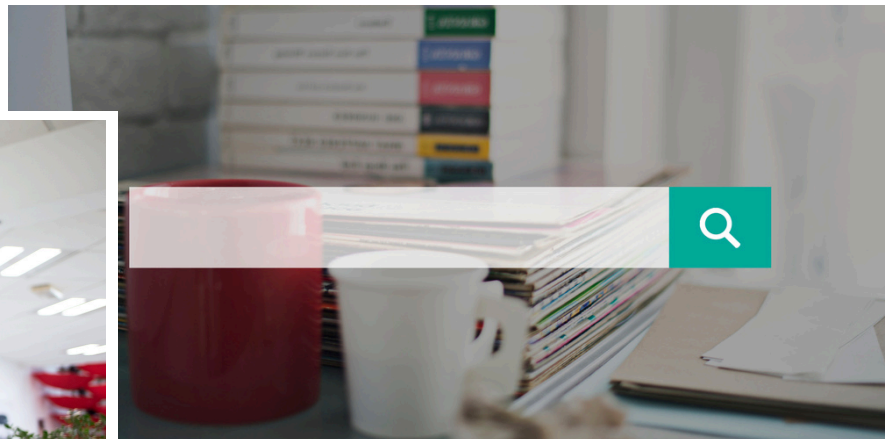
Once you explore your beliefs, interests, skills and strengths, personality, values, and reality factors, and several career options based on your self-understanding, you'll begin to take a close look at career options.

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.



<https://tinyurl.com/m7mbb6ky>

Once you have about **three** top career options that interest you the most (AKA your top contenders), you will conduct information interviews by networking with people working in those careers.





Information interviews will help you to gather more information to confirm or disconfirm that these career options are a good fit for you. Chapter 10 of the workbook supports you to craft good interview questions to ensure you get high quality, first-hand information. That information helps you to gauge the fit of your top career options to who you are.

**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's 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 doesn't necessarily predict being fulfilled in your career!





### PHASE 3 – CAREER DECISION MAKING AND ACTION PLANNING

Once you've 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.

**CAREER DECISION-MAKING**

**CAREER ACTION PLANNING**

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

Remember to be open and honest about your thoughts and feelings with your counsellor during all stages of the process. Having them as your support and helpful guide, especially at the action planning stage, is really helpful.

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.

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 steps, 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, are there any surprises? What do you think will be the benefits of going through this approach?