

## Looking inwards – how will it lead you to your career?

In the previous article, I touched upon career development as a journey that starts by understanding yourself. Based on this awareness, you would begin to gather information, analyse the collected data, and make an informed decision. The subsequent stages would involve implementing the choice, followed by a continual evaluation of where you are and where you want to go next.

Today, let's have an in-depth look at the first stage: Understanding yourself.

Young students are often stuck at this stage when it comes to mapping out their career. Questions that plague the self at this point may be — What do I want to study and what will I like? What kind of job will I thrive at? What do I want in my career? The answer to these is a blend of your career interests, skills and personality.

Self-assessment starts with self-awareness and it is not a quick process that can be completed overnight.



Begin with a central circle with a title like My Future or My Career or Life Plan; this is your starting point. Add outward branches to this core with topics like your Aspirations, Achievements, Qualities, Dreams, Strengths and Areas for improvement, and under each branch, add sub-topics and keep branching out. You can use different fonts, colours, symbols and images for differentiation. As you keep doing this exercise, your mind will be less cluttered with information, and the map will also help you recognise new connections between your thoughts.

Now it is important to note is that self-assessment starts with self-awareness and it is not a quick process that can be completed overnight. It takes time, effort and patience to introspect and grow. Hence, it is recommended that students begin this process in junior high school so that they can gradually identify and build on their interests, skills and values through academic, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. Discovering yourself is the first step in finding the right career for you!

### What career will I enjoy?

This question points toward your interests. So, make a list of all the hobbies, activities or fields that give you joy or that you want to explore further. Think of the activities where you are in a state of 'flow' – where you are completely engaged and immersed and time flies for you. You can also consider taking career interests tests like The O\*NET Interest Profiler or Holland Code Quiz or Motivational Appraisal Personal Potential (MAPP) assessment to get started.

### What job will I thrive at?

Now, this may be an indicator of your skills and abilities. Note down the areas you feel you are good at and create an inventory of your academic, technical and soft skills, your talents, expertise etc. Note also your strengths and competencies. At the same time, you can also review your weaknesses or shortcomings and note these as areas for improvement. You may also consider taking a test like the DiSC Behavior Inventory or Skills Matcher by CareerOneStop for extra guidance.

### What do I want in my career?

This is a loaded question that needs you to consider your personality & values in life, including belief systems, priorities, purpose in life, and also monetary & other expectations from a career. Explore tests like Big Five Personality Tests, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) or VIA Character Strengths for Students.

While taking external tests/assessments, opt for validated questionnaires with a scientific

approach, preferably through certified administrators. Even then, if your choices differ from these assessment tests reports, know that it is ultimately the strength of your dreams and your grit that will determine your success.

Hence, consider the tests as a guidance point that will get you thinking. If you require external help, you can approach your teachers, student counsellors, and even personalised career coaches who can help you in this process.

### Mind mapping

Now, what do you do with these answers? Start to make a mind-map or a Venn diagram capturing all the salient results, to have a visual representation of you as a person. You can use an A4 sheet of paper or a Word processor or even a mind mapping tool like Coggle, Diagrams.Net, Mind Genius etc. for this. Popularised by the author Tony Buzan, mind mapping is a technique that can help us explore our mind, organise our ideas and present our thoughts visually.

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