

ChalkingOut

Your Child's

Career Direction





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• experience inner drive

Find a Career that matches your 'interest'

Gray Matters Consulting brings to you a unique tool, myVector 'Inner Drive' Assessment, that would identify your child's interest and map them to suitable 'Fields of Study' and 'Occupations'. You may know your child's interest, but you may not be entirely aware of what 'occupations' the 'interest' corresponds to and what 'fields of study' he / she is likely to excel in. This is a scientific Assessment tool based on Dr John Holland's internationally acclaimed theory on 'interests' - linking them to careers.

Dear Parents,



Sanjay Roy Chowdhury
Managing Director
Gray Matters Consulting Pvt. Ltd.

In our times, professional lives were more about doing what you had to do well (living upto the expectations of being an MBA!), establishing yourself in the organization and make a success of that. But as life has become more evolved, connected, and more complex, young people are inextricably linked with the rest of the world. They have a richer palate in terms of access to knowledge, multiple opportunities and the ability to develop many talents, skills and hobbies.

Teenagers today have many choices and options as they plan for future careers. Many times, these options may not be as evident or clear-cut as they once were. As parents, you want only the best for your children, but with all the options available to young people today, oftentimes it is difficult for you to know what the best choices are. Without a solid career plan and concrete goals, it is easy for young people to get sidetracked and confused, and to end up nowhere near where they had hoped to be. Remember-the first step in career planning is self-understanding. Your child needs a good understanding of who she is, her interests, values, skills, and strengths before she starts thinking about a career.

After your child has engaged in several self-assessment activities and feels reasonably comfortable about who she is, encourage her to learn all she can about careers that are in line with her interests. Encourage her to talk to professionals, participate in all types of work-based learning experiences, and to get first-hand knowledge about jobs in which she may be interested.

Corporates are looking for people who can think through problems, work as part of a team, adapt to new circumstances, be creative and innovative, and add value to the company. These skills are not learned in the same way as we learn how to drive a car or use a computer keyboard. Learning these types of skills involve embracing an entirely new mindset.

We as Parents need to encourage our child to be bold, brave and different and have the courage to stand by their convictions. And most of all, they should enjoy while doing so!

The following pages would give you a very good idea of how to go about in the career planning process for your child with the help of easy-to-use and involved tools. These tools may look simple on the face of it, but when you sit down and put pen to paper you would realize their true potential.

We at Gray Matters, are happy to bring this 'career direction publication' to you and hope that this will set-in the process of planned discussions in your family and bring about an understanding of each other as a parent-child duo, which sometimes we fail to achieve because of 'generation gap'.

"People don't plan to fail. They just fail to plan"

Enjoy reading.

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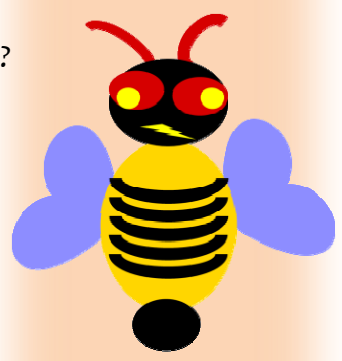
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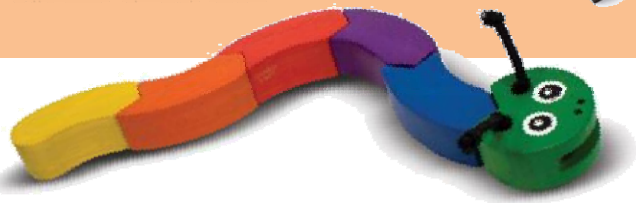
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1

Looking back at your **career**

*How did you start in
and move along your
career?*

OBJECT IN MIRROR ARE
CLOSER THAN THEY APPEAR



Critical Decisions: Right or Wrong?

How many times have you critically looked back at your career, except while preparing for an upcoming job interview? These are not fleeting thoughts that cross your mind on your way home from a late night at work. Rather, it's about purposefully analyzing your past career, in an effort to lend insight to your current or next career moves. Do you do that occasionally?

For most of us, a few specific career decisions have made the biggest impact on our career achievement. These could be milestones that steered you much closer to or farther away from your career goals. Until you sat down to think about it, you might have not even been aware of their impact on you. The social work course you took in class 9, after an all out war with Dad, the Bio-Mechanist? The second job with the growing telecom company that you took within 2 months of joining their key competitor? The time you championed your favourite research project, despite neurotic cries of all marketing mid-managers?

Think about which of your career decisions turned out to be the most critical. Which, among your critical career decisions, have been good, that is, have proven themselves viable in the long run, or helped you wade through unsettling times? What factors, within and beyond you, had made them right for your career? Maybe the role of some decisions is to open our eyes to new possibilities. Other decisions give you the right muscles and capabilities to let you to take drastic, catapulting decisions in the future.

Again, there are a set of decisions that, when you consider carefully, haven't quite proven to be really profitable for you.

They may have cost you valuable relationships, led you to lose your way for some time, or blindfolded your judgment. In hindsight, you might want to do things over quite differently. Like, re-define your priorities. Change the balance of both sides. Listen more to your family.



Stepping Stones

If your child is in elementary school, she is at the "awareness" level of career development. She is learning about who she is and about how to interact with others. She is also learning why attending school is important in the working world and what her future roles may be like.

Research shows that children who receive early career awareness training have:

- Improved school involvement and performance
- Increased personal and interpersonal skills
- Improved preparation for careers
- Increased career awareness, exploration, and planning skills.

Many elementary age school children learn through self-knowledge. They learn about jobs within their community—especially jobs done by members of your family. School counselors and teachers include career counseling and guidance in the classroom lessons that your child receives every day. Teachers and counselors also make the workplace language a part of everyday discussion with students. For example, they can tell students that being on time to school is similar to being on time for a job and about what will happen if a person is late to either place. These lessons will help your child throughout school and adulthood.





Wrong Approach Right Destination

When Manu started out in IT, he felt almost dragged into it. There weren't a lot of other options in and around the town he grew up in, and he wasn't too eager to live in the city, far away from home. He wasn't sure what he would like to do different from IT, but he knew that he liked technology the most when he was playing or experimenting with different audio devices. Years went by; Manu followed an ordinary career protocol, and started working at a regional IT company.

One day, during his lunch hour at work, he walked into the digital music store of one of the world's largest audio electronics company. As he listened to the store manager answer a customer's question on connecting multiple audio equipments, he chimed in, and offered a few ideas to the fellow customer. The store manager liked his ideas so much that he requested Manu to leave his contact number with them, just as an extension of their practice of collecting customer feedback.

A year later, Manu received a call from the company's Vice President of sound engineering, thanking him for his feedback and asking how he came up with his simple but powerful ideas. Manu explained his childhood experiences of connecting his grandmother's radio, father's micro-sound speaker and sister's pocket-walkman to generate 'opera-like' sound volume, sharpness, and surround. At the end of the call, he received an interview offer for the company's Chief Sound Designer position in Singapore. This time, Manu wasn't daunted by the looming distance from his family. He glided through the selection process, led by his long nurtured passion in inter-weaving sounds.

Today, ten years later, Manu is the audio electronic company's APAC Regional Director and the India President in Sound Engineering and Digital Integration. He cherishes his success, but most of all, he values the gratification and personal fulfilment he feels every morning he comes to work.

What would have happened if the customer had not asked the specific question related to inter connecting sounds just when Manu happened to be around? Or, if the store manager didn't think of taking the initiative of asking for Manu's contact number? What if the company had decided to scrap its yearly practice of discussing customer feedback with regional executives, because an alternative practice had gained more credence?

Was Manu's turning point all about Luck? Not all. For when Luck gave him the right ground, he could play with all his heart and might. Very few of us get so lucky, talented and successful like Manu. We can't base our career decisions on convenience and compromise, and leave it to the Universe to somehow bring us back to our career calling. We do what we can, as much and when ever. We take big and small steps that bring us closer to our ideal careers. For most of us, the wrong way could cost the right destination.



Personal Differences

Usually parents want their children to be like them. As children grow, their looks and personalities may or may not resemble their parents. Although some parents may want their children to be just like them, each child is unique. Discovering "who" your child is can be one of life's great pleasures. Recognizing that it truly does "take all kinds" makes your relationship with your child a treasure hunt rather than a disappointment.





Being Over-Zealous: The Pitfalls

Rajat wasn't the typical pale, nerdy guy of your class. Rather, he came across as someone who had got it all and right from pretty early on. He was a good student and a great football player; he was smart, good looking, charismatic and well spoken. While his other classmates were just chatting, or cramming for the last-hour score saver, he was organizing painting workshops, or coaching his friends in exam distress.

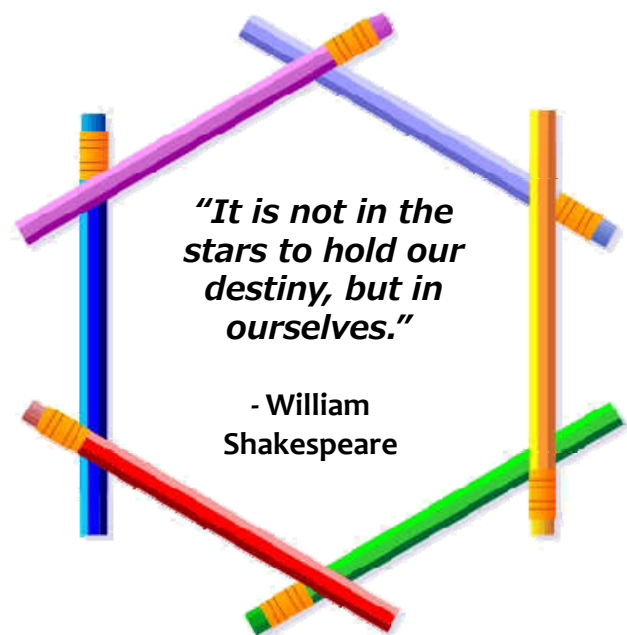
In high school, he knew he wanted to get into creative writing, and was already doing his special school projects with his father's colleague in advertising. He completed his pre planned majors in college, and then started out in client account planning with a reputed advertising agency. Five years into this job, he felt he needed another boost to catalyze his career growth, and got enrolled for post graduate studies at a premier communications management institute.

When he came back, armed with his degree and another goal-oriented career growth strategy, he was surprised that he didn't get as many offers as he had easily imagined. He could hear himself struggling in some of the interview questions for the right words. He got accepted into a mid-sized advertising company that had plans to grow rapidly in the next years.

Within months into his new role, he started feeling a strange sense of disinterest in his daily work. In less than a year, the company was concerned about the freshness of his ideas to help them grow. A few months later, Rajat quit his job, unable to align his talent with the company needs, and fight through his deep professional disillusionment.

So, what happened to Rajat? Where did he go wrong? One could hypothesize different things. Maybe he had started running so fast that he didn't have time to think where he'd really like to go. Perhaps, he felt burned out, so he couldn't come up with more original, fresh ideas. Or, he was busy making such grand strategies for his career, that he failed to heed the little signals or simple opportunities that came along his way.

Our careers, like our lives, are constantly changing, evolving. Being goal oriented, organized and diligent has huge returns, but we can't forget to also find time to play and stay spontaneous. Sometimes the over-zealous have their eyes too set upon the design of their paths; they're not always keeping track of their moving destinations.





2 The **key** influencers

*What influenced your
career choices?*



Your personality, environment, & opportunities

The table

When Mahatma Gandhi quit his career as a barrister and committed to a life and service in India's political freedom and development, he was deeply influenced by the environment around him. He had gradually started responding to the prevalent social inequity for Indians living abroad, and then later, to the ideological disharmony among the period's prominent Indian political leaders. The disquiet these caused within him led to his life's stark turning point, and his fresh, early career moves of politically galvanizing the South African Indian community, and travelling across the sub continent to better understand its needs.

Our immediate and larger socio-economic environment can have a strong impact on who we want to become and how we go about it. If your spouse and you are both doctors, there's a – quite higher possibility of your kid wanting to be a doctor herself. If most of your son's friends in grades 11 or 12 want to go into telecommunications, the odds are high that he's going to seriously consider, at least for a while, signing up for higher studies in that field. Other factors, like the most common occupations in and around a person's region, or the career choices and ideology of her role model or older siblings, may also influence her early career decisions.

So, to what extent are we propelled or limited by the quality and range of our environment? Do most of us get to rise above it, at the start or during our professional career? With time, does a professional find it easier to ride with or overcome such environmental forces? We'll look into these later in the section.

Your cards

What led King Ashoka to steer away, *overnight*, from relentless, ruthless territorial battles into a lifelong service in national development and spiritual fulfilment? The profound remorse he felt on the battleground of Kalinga. Had that single opportunity not opened his eyes so completely to the horror and futility of human violence, would he have found his life's and leadership's true calling? Perhaps he would have, still, but very gradually or much later.

We get opportunities that bring us closer to our career choices. We face issues that deflect us from or challenge us to arrive at our true destinations. In some cultures, being a boy can pre-orient you towards certain professions. You might have had an opportunity to work before going to college; that might have influenced your choice of major. Having or not having family money could have affected your early career choices.

Think about the cards you were handed out when you had started playing. There were some clear aces in them. The others were aces in disguise. Still others were either bad, or they mislead you.



You can make a difference in how your child sees herself. Some ways you can help build your child's self-esteem are:

- *Celebrate your child's uniqueness. Each child is different and should be valued for who she is.*
- *Offer genuine praise.*
- *Allow your child to experience being competent and successful. She should be permitted to make age-appropriate decisions.*
- *Involve your child in household chores. Children who have responsibilities feel important and valued.*






“If you can’t describe what you are doing as a process, you don’t know what you’re doing.”

- W. Edwards Deming

You



Alexander of Macedonia 325 BC had started out with a mixed bag. He was born into royalty, but had an over-ambitious, conniving mother, and a reckless, somewhat erratic father. His half Macedonian lineage threatened his succession to the throne; yet, at the age of 20, after his father was assassinated, he was declared the King of Macedonia. Throughout his life and career, his environment and opportunities had altered colours. But, his achievements soared above them. Alexander’s huge ambition, determination, great intelligence, and compelling leadership spurred him on to create one of the world’s largest ancient empires within a very short time.

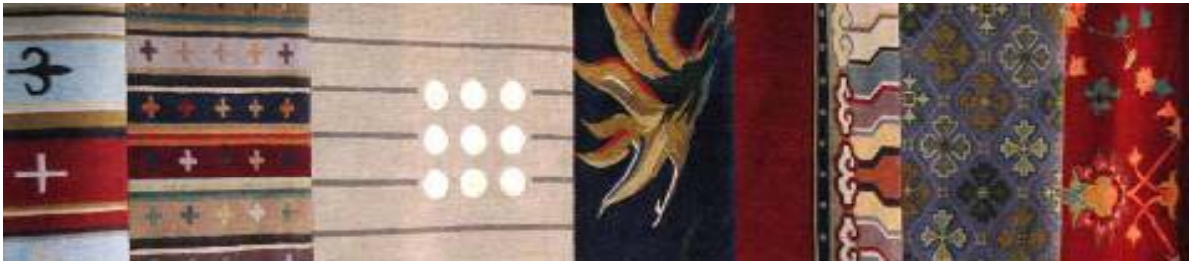
All successful people quote one way or the other: *Know what you want, then go get it.* Many people set out to be ‘successful’, without clearly knowing what success *specifically* means to them. As a result, their career choices turn out to be wrong decisions, even though they are making a lot of money, or have formidable socio-political power.

The greatest influence in your career choice is your *knowledge* of what that choice *should* be for you, independent of your environment, opportunities and constraints. If this knowledge is flawed, it **will** lead you to the wrong career. This knowledge, in turn, stems out of your knowledge of your *self*: what your core interests, skills and talents are, and how you define your professional purpose and ideology.

Other powerful influencers *within* you that impact your career decision making are your initiative in researching about different careers and

opportunities, career planning (the act of strategically achieving your career goals through your talent and professional opportunities), and your determination and resilience to reach your ideal destination. Your academic scores as well as domain knowledge and skill sets at the time of making such choice are key influencers too. They may pre-position you towards certain careers, as indicators of your innate capabilities and interests. The catch lies in not *defining* your *true* talent and career motivation through them.





What makes your move

So, you're sitting at table number 19 and you're dealt out a certain stack of cards. It's your turn to play. What's going to be your move?

The best player uses his mind to study everyone else on the table, and then decide the game *he* wants to play. Next, he looks at his cards and chooses one that can *best* play out *his* game.

What you're born with, and the opportunities and challenges that come your way, cannot *define* your career choice. Only your true inspiration can. Your environment and opportunities can lend shape to what you

really want to be. They can lead you towards it, or mislead you towards another choice that shall eventually prove less successful. If you hand over your career control to them, so will be.

Those who make successful career decisions do not under value the importance of their surroundings and chances, but they remain *in charge* of them. They use them to sharpen the definition of their career goals. Or, improve their skills in career decision-making. Or, strengthen their true inspiration and talent.



Middle School Focus

The middle school years are an important time for your child to explore his world. Part of that exploration revolves around careers. During middle school years, he will continue to become aware of jobs and careers, but the focus at this level is exploration. He will begin to know himself better by looking at his interests, abilities, personality, values, learning style, and achievements. Teachers, counselors, and career development coordinators (CDCs) will teach him to search for careers in which employed workers have interests similar to his own. He will read, research, and write about careers. Eventually, he will choose an area to focus on throughout his high school and post-secondary education.

Four-year plans

Throughout the middle grades, students will learn how to write a four-year high school plan, known as their career development plan (CDP). The career development plan is unique to each school system and to the individual students within the school system. Much attention is

given to preparation for writing the career development plan. In most North Carolina schools, middle grade students can take exploratory courses, participate in job shadowing, listen to career speakers, and participate in career fairs. They also use Internet technology to locate career resource information and become members of their own Career-Technical Student Organization or Career Exploration Clubs of North Carolina (CECNC).

Future satisfaction and success

Middle school counselors, career development coordinators (CDCs), and teachers include career development in classroom lessons. They make discussions about the world of work a part of everyday activities. They help your child make connections to what he is learning in class and why he will need to know that information or skill in the future. Your child is provided opportunities to learn, explore, and make good choices so that he will feel satisfied and successful in the future.



A large Ferris wheel at night, illuminated with golden lights, resembling a sunburst. The wheel's structure is visible against the dark sky, and the lights create a warm, glowing effect.

3 Understanding your child

*Your child's passion
and potential*



Stark strengths, Latent potential

You've already played your early cards. Now you have some insight about what went into your first career decisions. And you know from hindsight whether those early influencers turned out more right or wrong for you.

Now you look at your 10 or 18 year old, yawning at dinner, the night before her *final* final exam, and think to yourself: 'Can I make this any easier for her?' You reflect back even more, talk to your spouse and colleagues, and drop your kid a few hints on current career realities.

Let's start at your source and destination.
Your child.

Stark Strengths

Understanding your child's potential will challenge you to look beyond the standard and obvious. Your brother's daughter has always been a natural in writing, and conceptualizing intriguing scenarios for her school essay assignments. Your son, however, now in first year college, hasn't yet dazzled you with creative writing. But, he's great at organizing sports events, while keeping track of a myriad things and interacting with different types of people.

Are parents more likely to notice their child's natural strengths if they spring out of academic or formal learning contexts? What about those strengths that are born out of extracurricular endeavour, but eventually form the cornerstone of one's professional capabilities?

Latent Potential

Your colleague's concerned that her son doesn't mingle enough with his classmates.

"He's too shy," she worries. So, she sponsors a somewhat expensive summer camp expedition for him this year, hoping he'll get a chance to interact with peers and make new friends. Within the first week, the camp counsellor complains to her that her son isn't speaking much with anyone. Two days later, she receives a letter from her son, where he talks about the new projects they're doing, and characterizes each of his team mates. She shares the letter with you, and what you see is an 11-year old's first, fresh steps into understanding people's personalities and motivations.



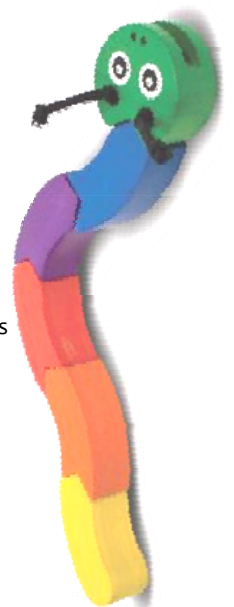
Years from this day, your colleague's son would grow up to be a prominent child psychiatrist of the region.

Your daughter in high school would never stand for any class or school elections, but always work hard in the background campaign. You wonder if she will lack in leadership confidence later in her career. But you overhear her on phone sometimes, patiently motivating campaign supporters to team up in the school's progress. Are these seeds of a less flamboyant, but more impactful, compassionate leadership?

A high-schooler weak in statistical calculations possesses great deductive reasoning.

An adolescent low in fact-based rationalization is high in spatial intelligence. A child uninterested in linguistic achievement finds her expression through performing arts.

Cases of such 'hidden talent' abound. With the right personal initiative and family or school support, such potential can define the core of a person's career capabilities. The parent's challenge lies in identifying, encouraging, and nurturing such potential.





Likes and Drives

Your child's innate potential can lead you to his career motivation and interests. But, he may not always find the right opportunities to display or practice such potential. How do you still help him discover his interests?

Observe his hobbies and favourite activities. Has your son always been one who likes to take care of the guests at home, and design games to entertain his younger cousins? Careers that thrive on people interaction and team work, like human resources, marketing, or social development, are good choices. Does your teenager paint, or love visiting archaeological tourist sites? There are abundant opportunities in architecture, archaeology, graphic or fashion design and advertising, to name a few. Research shows that your child will be most satisfied in her career choice if such choice is based on her interests and favourite activities.

But, what if your child doesn't seem to have a predominant interest? Relax. He does have one, no doubt, but it's still waiting to be discovered! Be attentive to the books, TV shows, and websites he likes spending time with. Plan family visits to museums, performing arts theatres, or sports events. Let him join a peer club or community service he likes.

High School Focus

Students often graduate from high school without a clear idea of what they can do or want to do for a career.

Career planning is life planning. Your child is successful in career planning when he is able to become a full participant in an ever-changing environment. In high school, your teenager will receive opportunities to develop a career focus.

He may choose to go to work right after high school graduation or may go to community college or a trade school.

Maybe he will join the military or prepare for a career requiring a four-year (or more) college education.

As a high school student, he must follow his career development plan. Each year he will review that plan, make any necessary changes to the classes that he has scheduled, and seek opportunities to learn about careers in and out of school.

Your teen needs to continue to be aware of new careers and to explore careers that he is interested in. The focus of high school, however, is planning.



Had they not followed their inner drive ...

HENRY FORD might have been a **FARMER**
EINSTEIN a **PATENT OFFICE CLERK**
WALT DISNEY a **VIOLIN PLAYER**
VAN GOGH a **PRIEST**



First of William and Mary Ford's six children, Henry Ford, grew up on a prosperous family farm in Michigan. Henry enjoyed a childhood typical of the rural nineteenth century, spending days in a one-room school and doing farm chores. At an early age, he showed an interest in mechanical things and a dislike for farm work. He decided not to become a rich farm owner and left home for the nearby city of Detroit to work as an apprentice machinist.



Understanding SELF is the starting point.

4 Child's career decision-making

How can you help in your child's career selection?



Child's Nature, Your Nurture

Nature vs. nurture - what's more powerful? Our intrinsic nature, or our surroundings? Some say, with age we learn to cope better, so our nature finds greater fulfillment. Others argue that in living among our surroundings, we gradually lose touch with ourselves, and get less natural. Both sides, however, do concede – our nurture significantly interferes with our *real* nature, sometimes supporting, sometimes challenging it.

Your child may be more resilient against her surroundings or attuned to her inner nature, but she'll do best only when she has the *right* support to capitalize on her natural strengths and external advantages. Or, to deal with her development needs and outward challenges. The key stakeholders in such support system are your child, you, and, her school or college. Career coaches, vocational training service providers, the government and industry play a less direct, but still important role.

But, where does such support reside? At the same three nodes. Let's start at the table. Your child's environment.

Turn the table

Your family has created a generational legacy in medicine. You have been surgeons, researchers, and psychiatrists. Your son never let a score down in biology, but you see him getting far more participatory when the after dinner discussion turns to politics from medicine. His reading interests and out of class projects also reflect this taste. Now, you know all too well about the weight of family legacy. But, *this* time, you want to do different. What?

Sit him down and ask him about what he likes in political or economic theory. And, in medicine. Discuss what *you* like or don't like about being a surgeon, and talk to him about the practical realities. Help him assess whether he'll still like medicine, after he's had to fight through such realities. If not, then what are those professions that can flip this balance for him?

Facilitate asking 'what if' questions and exploring alternatives with respect to your child's immediate environment. Encourage her to look beyond the current nature and range of colleges or companies in your city. Team up with her brother or favourite real-life role model, and try to break her spell of blind idolization. Talk to other parents or school authorities to address undesirable peer pressure in a student's career decision-making. Suggest organizing peer to peer discussions on what students know and like about different career options.



You can help your child become an explorer of the world by encouraging curiosity:

- When your child wants to try a new activity, explain that she must stick with it for a specific period of time. For example, a child learning to play a musical instrument may find practicing boring. If she sticks with it long enough to learn to play a few tunes, however, that attitude may change.
- Monitor your child's scheduled activities. If she has given the activity a chance and is not enjoying it, it may be time to try something else.
- Be sure an activity you are thinking about for your child matches her interests rather than your own.
- A child who shows curiosity or asks questions about an activity is actually showing an interest. For example, a young person who goes into her father's workshop to watch may enjoy taking a carpentry or woodworking class



**“No wind favours him who has no destined port ”
--Montaigne**

Change the cards

In making her first career choice, your child faces specific opportunities or limitations sourcing from herself, you, your spouse, her school, and other people or institutions. As a proactive child-parent duo, you might explore alternatives to either leverage those opportunities, or fight through the challenges. Consider some of these phenomena:



Sometimes ideas, born out of others’ feedback, or even careful self insight, do not retain the same validity once you test them out. A 19-year old may feel her career calling is in being a journalist. But, a few months into her first job as Editor’s Assistant, she may be feeling increasingly frustrated by the need to balance commerce with the stark truth.

It’s important to test your child’s preferences before they take their first career plunge. Encourage her to do industry projects or internships in the field she *thinks* she likes. Schools or colleges can talk to different industry associations to share practical work or learning opportunities with their students.

Being a boy or girl opens up somewhat different worlds of opportunities and challenges. Our society has indeed come a long way, but fields like law enforcement, construction engineering, or aeronautic driving still remain hard to break into for girls. Boys don’t usually find easy encouragement in getting into fashion designing, human resources, or social work.

Help your daughter or son to truthfully consider and question these gender stereotypes. They might apply to him or her, in part, or not at all. Such stereotypes could be very strong in your child’s preferred profession, but she might feel it’s still worth a fight for her. Then, discuss specific ways to promote, and further develop her spatial intelligence and physical agility. Or, suggest how he could refine his artistic capabilities, and make them even more marketable.

Many such opportunities or constraints change colours. As you hope to bring the best out of them, keep an eye on your child’s goals. If they have changed, the same circumstances may now turn from being challenging to helpful, or flip around.

What won’t change is your child’s core nature – her interests, motivation, values, and potential.



Time spent curled up in the shade with a book or lying on the cool grass watching an anthill is just a different, less structured way for children to learn.

You can help your child in the process of discovery and learning by making her more aware of her surroundings:

- What cultures are represented in your neighborhood or community?
- Are there ethnic restaurants, shops, or other organizations that support these different cultures?
- What kind of industry is in the area? Are factory or agricultural tours available?
- Are there opportunities to visit museums or attend the theater or concerts?
- Your most important task is to guide your youngster’s summer experiences. Monitor television and computer time, and encourage active involvement in summer learning.





Develop Your Child

It's all within you. You've heard yourself say this many times to motivate yourself or your kid. Still, you find it hard to always developmentally engage yourself from within. Kids or adolescents, in turn, find it even harder.

Self knowledge is key in identifying one's right career choice. But, as much as one's self knowledge is, in itself, a moving target, it takes serious learning to practice it. We can move then from 'just acting' to 'reflecting, then acting'. Encourage your child to understand her career motivations, interests, and values. Will earning more and more money make her the happiest? It does, for many, but not most. Or, does she place more value in having work autonomy, or achieving high recognition for professional expertise?

It's also important to balance such self searching with quality feedback from outside. Before the doctor sister, lawyer uncle, or architect neighbour became successful, how had they started out? What careers offer the right fit and challenge to your child's needs? Help your child engage in such systematic career planning. You'll see a lot of doubts getting defogged, and discover welcome surprises!

And as your child reflects, help him act. How will he improve his skills in public speaking, if he is to get into management consulting? How can he best capitalize on and showcase his strengths in analyses or creative insight? What lessons can he carry over from his past academic successes or failures into starting his professional career?

As your child gets more engaged in self knowledge and development, she should find a balance between system and spontaneity. Or, learn to trust her intuition in some cases, beyond logic or fact-based rationalization. Her environment and present opportunities now don't get to dictate her career choice; they're merely means or tools to help her achieve her right choice.





5 Last words on the first steps

*Guiding principles into your
child's career decision making*



Last words, On the first steps

Our long story short, the child - not her parents, others, surroundings or available opportunities - should lead her to her first career choice. This way, the choice is more likely to be right.

10 Ways to help your child

1. Find out which career pathways are offered at your child's school
2. Know which tests your child is expected to take and when.
3. Ask about work-based learning opportunities
4. Learn to read his transcript, and learn how to interpret test scores.
5. Become familiar with Internet career websites and what kinds of information you can get from them.
6. When your child has identified a career focus, consider finding a trustworthy mentor (an adult) who works in that career area.
7. Encourage him to find summer jobs and summer internship opportunities.
8. Talk to your child about careers. Turn a trip to the grocery store or a summer vacation into a career lesson by talking about the jobs that are involved.
9. Encourage him to keep a journal, scrapbook, or portfolio that reflects his career planning.
10. Always have a secure location for the original copies of awards, certificates, and letters of recommendation, test scores, and grade reports.

If you haven't begun already, just start easy. Change the dinner table talk. Chat. Talk about sports, movies, politics and important people. Your child will start looking up more from his plate. Listen to what he has to say.

- Children, or even adolescents, have an easy way of knowing the truth about things. Probably because they're not yet conditioned in 'taking everything else into account'. Help her channel this single minded clarity into setting her career direction.
- Opportunities play out with each other. They neutralize, complement, diminish or change the whole effect. Help your child select and order them right. His pack of opportunities should lead towards *his* goal, not create a different game altogether.
- Self reflection is not likely to be an interesting sport for many children. Use what if scenarios and real life examples to help her know where her drive and interests lie. Initially, apply them to 'some other' kid, and get her to think what *she* would do if she were in that kid's place.
- Children have great imagination. Use it to help your child explore beyond his immediate surroundings. Find out how his actions and decisions would have been different if there were some big changes to his current reality.
- You're the Gen Y parent. You're over-zealous, you over-analyze. Don't get too lost in dynamics of your kid's career selection process, or *your* performance in it. Focus more on what's happening with *your child*, less on what and how much *you* are doing. Be agile and ready to mount off your own theory if you feel your child needs something different. And, recognize your limits. You play a very important stakeholder, but it's your child who is and should be driving the whole process.



6 Tools for making the right choice



The following pages would give you some tools which you as a parent can use, along with your child to find out / assess her interests, values, skills and abilities.

There are also some worksheets which would help you in proper career planning for your child.

These tools can be used for all children from age 12 upwards.

Please note these tools are not for one-time use. You can apply these tools at various points in your child's career progression. You may find how some of the interests and values are changing as your child grows up.

•WHAT DO YOU VALUE IN A CAREER.

•YOUR CHILD'S NEEDS & WANTS

•ANALYSING YOUR SKILLS

•YOUR CHILD'S ABILITIES

•I WANT MY CHILD TO...

•PARENT ACTION PLAN

inside



What do you value in a career?

	Not Important	Very Important
Challenge		
You enjoy being stretched and given new problems to work on	1 2 3 4 5	
Communication		
You enjoy being able to express ideas well in writing or in speech	1 2 3 4 5	
Creativity		
Thinking up new ideas and ways of doing things is important to you	1 2 3 4 5	
Expertise		
You like being known as someone with special knowledge or skills	1 2 3 4 5	
Freedom		
You would like to have flexible work hours	1 2 3 4 5	
Helping others		
It's important to you to help individuals or groups in your work	1 2 3 4 5	
Helping society/community		
You like your work to be worthwhile for the community	1 2 3 4 5	
Independence		
You like working your way without others telling you what to do	1 2 3 4 5	
Learning		
It is important for you to learn new things in the course of your work	1 2 3 4 5	
Location		
You want to work only in particular places and not in others	1 2 3 4 5	
Money		
Earning a large amount of money is important to you	1 2 3 4 5	
Organisation		
You would enjoy being a part of a well-known organisation	1 2 3 4 5	
Peace		
You prefer not to have pressure or uncomfortable demands at work	1 2 3 4 5	
People contact		
You enjoy having a lot of contact with people	1 2 3 4 5	
Physical activity		
You want to be physically active	1 2 3 4 5	
Precision		
You like working at things which involve care and concentration	1 2 3 4 5	

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You want to be physically active	1 2 3 4 5	
Precision		
You like working at things which involve care and concentration	1 2 3 4 5	
Pressure		
You like working to deadlines	1 2 3 4 5	

What do you value in a career?

What do I want?

Look at the values above which you rated 4 or 5. Choose five and write them below, changing the 'you' in each statement to 'I'. Example:

Value: Challenge

Statement: I enjoy being stretched and given new problems to work on.

Value: _____

Statement: _____

Value: _____

Statement: _____

Value: _____

Statement: _____

Value: _____

Statement: _____

Value: _____

Statement: _____

If you find that these personalised statements don't quite fit you:

Try writing the statement in your own words.

Pick another value you rated a 4 or 5 and try that one.

When making decisions about your career, keep your values in mind.

Your Child's Needs & Wants

Purpose: To identify your child's top two career needs and wants.

Instructions

Think of the 10 career needs and wants below in terms of their importance to you.

Circle the answer that best describes its' relevance to you. Look at your choices in the "Very Important" column, go through them and choose no more than two that you view as the most important.

Write these two career needs and wants below.

	Less important	Important	Very important
MONEY — A need for extras beyond what you live on			
RESPECT — The prestige that some occupations provide (Example: a doctor)	Less important	Important	Very important
FREEDOM — Being able to work independently with little supervision	Less important	Important	Very important
STABILITY — Occupations that have little turn-over or that offer job security	Less important	Important	Very important
VARIETY — Occupations that expose you to diverse experiences and locations	Less important	Important	Very important
LEISURE — Occupations that provide you with ample time for family and hobbies	Less important	Important	Very important
LEADERSHIP — Occupations with responsibility for others and for planning	Less important	Important	Very important
SERVICE — Occupations that help people and society in a very direct way	Less important	Important	Very important
INTEREST — Working in a field that you find stimulating	Less important	Important	Very important
CHALLENGE — A field that repeatedly tests your skills and abilities	Less important	Important	Very important

Analysing your skills

Use this activity to help you analyse the types of skills you have. It will help you work out what you are good at and the skills you might like to develop further.

Think about your hard and soft skills

Hard skills are specific, sometimes technical activities that you can do competently. For example, doing precise, detailed and accurate work, or driving vehicles and using equipment.

Soft skills are qualities and strengths that are specific to you as an individual. For example, readily taking responsibility and adapting easily to a wide range of activities and unexpected changes.

Think about whether your skills are transferable, specialist or self-management

Transferable skills can be gained in a range of settings, not just the workplace, and are useful for a variety of jobs, for instance influencing and persuading people. These can be soft or hard skills.

Specialist skills are specific to a particular area of work and are often gained by work experience or specialist training, for instance using scientific equipment. These are usually hard skills.

Self-management skills can be gained and used in a range of settings and relate to how you work, for instance using your time effectively. These can be both hard and soft skills.

Analysing your skills

Write your skills in the left-hand column of the chart below. If you run out of space, use another chart.

For each skill, decide if it's a transferable (T), self-management (SM) or specialist (S) skill and tick the right box.

Then decide if you are competent (C) in this skill, need to improve it (I) or would like the chance to develop it further (D), and tick the right box.

My skills	Type of skill			Level of skill		
	T	SM	S	C	I	D

Now discuss the skills that you would like to develop further with your Parent or someone who can help you plan ways to do this.

Your Child's Abilities

Purpose: To identify your child's abilities.

Instructions

Think of the abilities listed below in terms of how your child compares to someone in her age group (friends/classmates).

Circle the answer that best describes her abilities when compared to her friends and classmates.

COMMUNICATION (includes speech, writing, persuasion, reading and comprehension)	Below Average	Average	Above Average
MATH (includes adding, subtracting)	Below Average	Average	Above Average
SPATIAL (includes biology, chemistry, geology, and astronomy)	Below Average	Average	Above Average
SCIENCE (includes biology, chemistry, geology, and astronomy)	Below Average	Average	Above Average
LEADERSHIP (is an ability to take on responsibility in a group, to motivate others, and to provide direction in group activities)	Below Average	Average	Above Average
ART (includes painting, drawing, sculpture, acting, and music)	Below Average	Average	Above Average
PHYSICAL PERFORMANCE (includes athletics, dance, and a variety of activities that require coordination)	Below Average	Average	Above Average
MECHANICAL (is an ability to understand and fix various machines and appliances)	Below Average	Average	Above Average

"Go confidently in the directions of your dreams. Live the life you have imagined."

- Henry David Thoreau



I want my Child to...

“Many studies show that young people cite their parents most frequently as the main influence in their occupational plans. No other group even comes close.”

What do you really want for your child? That seems easy to figure out! But it always helps to think it through. Please take this short assessment and rank your top three choices by entering 1-3.

I want my child to...

- have personal happiness
- have a feeling that her career is fulfilling
- follow in my footsteps
- have a career that strongly relates to personal interests and strengths
- have a career with high earning potential
- work in the family business
- experience high risk, adventure, and challenge in a career
- have fame and fortune
- have financial security, but riches aren't necessary
- serve the community
- be financially independent by age 30
- help others before personal gain

How do you think your child would respond? Rank what you think her top three choices are – or let her do it herself!

I want to...

- have personal happiness
- have a feeling that my career is fulfilling
- follow in my parent's footsteps
- have a career that strongly relates to personal interests and strengths
- have a career with high earning potential
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- be financially independent by age 30
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What do your choices tell you? Are you focused on monetary gain or self-fulfillment for your child? Security or risk? When helping your child plan for future success, always try to keep in mind:

- what you truly want for your child,
- not to impose your “wants” as more important than your child's desires,
- whatever you and your child identify to be most important, only careful planning will make it happen, and
- a solid career plan is for everyone – the person who wants to make a million dollars by age 30 and the person who wants nothing more than to play the harp and move people to tears through music.

Parent Action Plan (What you can do to help!)

Learn the steps in the Career Development Process and be involved with your child in each step of the way:

Career Action Planning Form

Directions: Using the “Six Steps to Choosing a Career” identified below, and the resources and information you have received, work with your child to identify activities that either you, your child, or both of you can do, and provide an estimate for when you hope to finish each activity.

This Career Action Plan is for: _____

Example:

Step 1: Identify Interests and Values

Activity: (what?) Borrow books on different careers from the public library and look through them together.

Assigned to: (who?) Mom

Timeframe: (when?) Next week

Step 1: Identify Interests and Values

Activity: (what?) _____

Assigned to: (who?) _____

Timeframe: (when?) _____

Activity: (what?) _____

Assigned to: (who?) _____

Timeframe: (when?) _____

Activity: (what?) _____

Assigned to: (who?) _____

Timeframe: (when?) _____

Step 2: Know Your Skills and Strengths

Activity: (what?) _____

Assigned to: (who?) _____

Timeframe: (when?) _____

Activity: (what?) _____

Assigned to: (who?) _____

Timeframe: (when?) _____

Activity: (what?) _____

Assigned to: (who?) _____

Timeframe: (when?) _____

Step 3: Find Out All You Can About Career Trends and Options

Activity: (what?) _____

Assigned to: (who?) _____

Timeframe: (when?) _____

Activity: (what?) _____

Assigned to: (who?) _____

Timeframe: (when?) _____

Activity: (what?) _____

Assigned to: (who?) _____

Timeframe: (when?) _____

Step 4: Explore Options and Gain Experience

Activity: (what?) _____

Assigned to: (who?) _____

Timeframe: (when?) _____

Activity: (what?) _____

Assigned to: (who?) _____

Timeframe: (when?) _____

Step 5: Set Realistic Goals

Activity: (what?) _____
Assigned to: (who?) _____
Timeframe: (when?) _____

Activity: (what?) _____
Assigned to: (who?) _____
Timeframe: (when?) _____

Activity: (what?) _____
Assigned to: (who?) _____
Timeframe: (when?) _____

Step 6: Be Persistent

Activity: (what?) _____
Assigned to: (who?) _____
Timeframe: (when?) _____

Activity: (what?) _____
Assigned to: (who?) _____
Timeframe: (when?) _____

Activity: (what?) _____
Assigned to: (who?) _____
Timeframe: (when?) _____



Parent Action Plan (Other Routes!)

Volunteer to speak at your child's school about your own career. Discuss trends and options regarding the industry in which you work.

Make sure your child understands exactly what you do for a living. It would be a good idea to have students, especially your own children, to shadow **you** on the job.

It can also help to approach your company about providing and/or expanding work-based learning opportunities for students. Ask your employer to sponsor a job shadowing day for middle school students or to sponsor some internship opportunities for high school students.

Do discuss with your child his high school career development plan. Meet with the guidance counsellor or career specialist at his high school at least once a year to ensure that his academic preparation and abilities are in line with his career goals.

Encourage your child to get firsthand knowledge from the workplace regarding the career cluster she has chosen to pursue. If your child has chosen to be a dental hygienist, visit this department at your local technical college and talk to the department head about the dental hygiene program and job opportunities in the area. Set up a time for your child to job shadow a dental hygienist at a local dentist's office.



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• experience inner drive

**Your child's future is too important
to be left to "luck" or "chance."**

Gray Matters Consulting brings to you a unique tool, myVector 'Inner Drive' Assessment, that would identify your child's interest and map them to suitable 'Fields of Study' and 'Occupations'. You may know your child's interest, but you may not be entirely aware of what 'occupations' the 'interest' corresponds to and what 'fields of study' he / she is likely to excel in. This is a scientific Assessment tool based on Dr John Holland's internationally acclaimed theory on 'interests' - linking them to careers.



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