Career Choice: What Color Is Your Parachute?

By: Matt Jackson, M.A.

Trying to choose a career can be a difficult process. Many people are thinking a lot about jobs and careers these days in our current economy. Maybe you’re thinking about changing jobs or looking for a job. Maybe you just want to know if you’re in a job that’s right for you. One thing vocational psychology research has taught us is that your personality plays a role in career choice, success, and satisfaction. Are you someone who likes to be surrounded by others and a lot of activity OR do you prefer quiet and privacy? Do you prefer detail oriented activities OR are you someone who would rather think in more broad terms? Depending on how you answered these questions different jobs might be right for you.

Dr. Richard Bolles wrote a book entitled What Color Is Your Parachute to help people to make decisions about possible career paths. One interesting activity Bolles suggests is “The Party.” This activity can help you to gain some ideas about what types of jobs might best suit your personality. Imagine you’ve gone to “a party” in a six cornered room. Each corner is filled with a group of people who are talking with each other. Read through the following descriptions of each group and think about how you would fit with each group.

The first corner is filled with people who prefer working with tools, objects, machines or maybe plants or animals. They like to be outdoors. Many of them have mechanical or athletic ability. The second corner is a group of people who like to learn about how the world around them works. They like to analyze and solve problems as well as investigate things. A third corner consists of people who are artistic and intuitive. They enjoy using their imagination and being creative. They tend to prefer situations that are unstructured.

The fourth corner is filled with individuals who like to work with people and who speak and express themselves well with words. They enjoy teaching and training people as well as helping and curing others. They’re interested in promoting the development of other people. The fifth corner consists of individuals who also like to work with people, but in a different way. They like to manage and organize groups of people. Many of them serve in leadership capacities. They also like to help organizations be successful and they are interested in economic success. The sixth corner is filled with people who like to work with numbers and information. They are detail oriented and like to put other people’s plans into action in order to successfully accomplish clear goals.

Which corner would you be drawn to initially? Now, pretend this group decides to leave for another party, but you’re not ready to leave yet. Which group do you join next? Now your second group leaves. Don’t worry, it’s not you, it’s just getting late! With which of the remaining groups will you spend the rest of the evening? The three groups you chose can help you sort out what jobs might be a good fit for you. You can use these groups to help you match your occupational personality to job types. Dr. Bolles used John Holland’s occupational typing research to develop this activity. The first group is Realistic, The second is Investigative, The third is Artistic, the fourth is Social, the fifth is Enterprising and the sixth is Conventional. When you list your top three choices in order it helps give you a general idea of what jobs might best suit your personality.

For more specific information you can go online to the Learn More Indiana site at www.learnmoreindiana.org Alternatively, you may want to have a few career counseling sessions to talk over your options. At the Ball State University Practicum Clinic you can talk with a counselor as well as take a number of different career tests. All of these services are offered for a small fee, and counselors would be happy to meet with you.
Dear Wary Worker,

You bring up a very good point. Even if you have found the perfect career, having bad relationships with your coworkers can make your job a nightmare. Even worse, it can affect your health! In fact, psychologist Arie Shirom and his colleagues, who recently published in the journal Health Psychology, found that people who lack social support at work are 2.4 times more likely to die than people who have solid, supportive work relationships. But even the most agreeable person is likely to meet a few difficult coworkers over the course of their career. Here are a few tips to help you cultivate harmonious relationships with your coworkers:

- Don’t participate in hurtful gossip. Some gossip is normal, but malicious rumors and negativity can destroy morale. If you do participate in gossip, remember that everything you say could be traced back to you and could further alienate your coworkers.

- Address conflict directly, but with diplomacy. If you have a problem with a particular coworker, letting the conflict fester will just make the situation worse. Try having a private conversation with the person, but make sure you remain pleasant and professional. If your workplace has one, you can also use a mediator or human resources officer to facilitate the conversation.

- Build alliances. Are all of your coworkers unpleasant, or are a few difficult people keeping you from developing relationships with more friendly coworkers? The support of workplace allies can help you to get ahead in the workplace, manage difficulties with other workers, and make your job a much more enjoyable experience in general. Try reaching out to a few of your fellow workers and see what happens. Give them credit for their efforts and treat them with respect, and they are likely to respond similarly.

Sincerely,
Wary Worker

Dear MG,

I love my new job, but I just can’t stand some of my coworkers! They seem like huge gossips, and there’s a lot of negativity. Do you have any tips for dealing with them without losing my cool?

Sincerely,
Wary Worker

Another key to achieving balance is for parents to seek out family-friendly employers – not always easy to do. For example, employers who provide flex time, part-time work, extended family leaves, and other options may be better suited for families in which both parents work. Additionally, parents can seek out employers who provide support to working families, such as flexible working arrangements, on-site childcare, parent support networks, and emergency daycare coverage. When thinking about returning to work or seeking a job after having children, it is important for parents to ask employers about these issues and figure out the employer’s opinions on supporting family values.

Learning to balance family and work can be particularly stressful for a single parent. One way to cope with such stress is to reach out to family and friends for support. This can be done through joining parent support groups, religious organizations, or simply asking friends to help out or provide a much needed break. Additionally, it is important to make health a priority and take time to focus on one’s emotional and physical well-being. Many working parents get so caught up in the day-to-day that they forget the importance of exercising, eating healthy, and getting enough rest. Taking care of oneself and developing strong relationships are key aspects of achieving balance and coping with conflict and stress in the home.
By: Ryan Hess, M.A.

It's that time of the year when the weather is grey and dull and many people experience a let down after the holidays. Add to that those pesky New Year’s resolutions (along with the pressure to keep them), and January can be one of the most stressful times of the year. The strain of starting a new year at work, on top of all this, can compound things and will really take its toll if you are not careful. So how do you prevent your professional life from interfering with your personal life? Here are five simple things you can do that will help you to not take your work home with you.

**Take breaks during the day.** Even just a few minutes of rest or reflection can make a big difference. Doing this before work helps you to feel more calm and in control. Make sure to do this during the day as well, as this can break up the stress/monotony of work. Before you head home at the end of the day, allow yourself a few minutes to mentally unwind. This can make you more prepared to drive in traffic and/or bad weather conditions and will enable you to be in a better mood when you get home. Experiment with different ways of relaxing to find out what works for you. The article on page 5 of this issue offers great suggestions for relaxation techniques at work.

**Be physically active.** As your doctor will tell you, exercise is good for your heart AND your head. When you work out, your body releases chemicals called endorphins that help to put you in a good mood. The American Medical Association (AMA) suggests that when you first start working out, you should keep your routine simple. As you get more accustomed to working out, your routine can become more complex. At work, take a few minutes to stretch your arms, neck, back and legs. If you can, walk around for a little bit. This will help to get the blood flowing and can help you to feel less stiff and rigid at work.

**Emphasize the positive.** People often focus on the negative parts of their job. It is easy to dwell on the mistakes that were made or on the mean things the boss said. Thinking about these issues will only put you in a bad mood and will make you like your job less. Try making a list of the things you do enjoy about your job. In addition, give yourself credit for the hard work you do and for the accomplishments you have achieved. This will boost your confidence and it will also help you to get along better with your boss and co-workers.

**Eat healthy.** Pack your lunch the night before and make sure you drink enough water while at work. These steps will make sure you are hydrated and properly nourished, allowing you to perform your best at work. Eating fast food and drinking soda will slow your body down and can cause long-term health risks. Be sure to include tasty snacks like celery and peanut butter or carrots and hummus that you can nibble on during the day. The American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) recommends avoiding highly caffeinated energy drinks that temporarily increase your productivity but leave you feeling tired and sluggish in the end.

**Smile.** Research has shown that the simple act of smiling helps to put people in a good mood. Additionally, people who smile are likely to cause the people around them to smile. The contagious nature of smiles can help to brighten even the most dreary of workplaces. Go to the web page at http://longevity.about.com/od/lifelongbeauty/tp/smiling.htm to see about.com’s Top 10 Reasons to Smile.
### Featured Counselor Profile

**Nicholas Lee, M.A., LMFT**

**By: Laura Walker, M.A.**

This column is a way for the community to learn about the diverse talents, both master’s and doctoral students, employed at the Ball State University Counseling Practicum Clinic.

Nick Lee received his M.A. in marriage and family therapy from Indiana Wesleyan University and is currently a first-year doctoral student in the Department of Counseling Psychology and Guidance Services. Nick is currently seeing clients at the Ball State University Counseling Practicum Clinic. The following is a discussion with Jackie, one of the many talented individuals employed at the Ball State University Practicum Clinic.

**How did you decide to pursue your Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology?**

I took a roundabout direction in pursuing my Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology. My master’s degree is actually in marriage and family therapy, which has been my predominant identity for the last 8 years. Six of those 8 years have been spent in full-time practice. I hadn’t seriously considered pursuing a Ph.D., especially in counseling psychology, until I met Dr. Paul Spengler. We developed a collegial relationship around a mutual interest, Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT). Dr. Spengler was interested in creating an EFT course at Ball State, and given my expertise on the subject, consulted with me about resources and training opportunities. As our relationship grew, I became more and more interested in what the field of counseling psychology had to offer and the new career options that were possible with a Ph.D.

**What are your clinical interests?**

I am predominantly interested in working with couples. I have extensive training in EFT, which is one of two empirically supported approaches to working with couples. In fact, I am one of two certified EFT therapists in the entire state of Indiana. Each year I help facilitate weeklong “externships” in EFT, where various mental health professionals come together to immerse themselves in learning the theory, techniques, and application of the model. It’s very exciting to be a part of that level of training. I have found that training other professionals enhances my clinical work. It keeps me sharp and fresh as I work with my clients. Anyone who has done couples work knows that it can be uniquely challenging to balance the needs of both partners in session. I find that kind of challenge to be exciting. From a systemic perspective, when the couple has established a more secure bond with one another, they are better able to help their family navigate through normal life cycle tasks more effectively. By impacting one part of the system, I can have an impact on the whole system. That is also very rewarding to me.

**Are you currently doing any research?**

I am currently working alongside Dr. Paul Spengler on conducting a meta-analysis of the existing EFT literature. A small meta-analysis on EFT was conducted over 10 years ago and since then a large amount of research has been conducted with various populations impacted by various disorders (e.g., parents who have chronically ill children, depression, and eating disorders). We hope to pull together this research and look at its overall impact on outcome as well as any moderators and mediators of change that may influence how successful therapy is for couples.

**What has been your most influential (or exciting, or enjoyable) work experience?**

Two work experiences come to mind. The first is the EFT training I am privileged to be a part of. I get to work with an outstanding team of EFT trainers and meet all kinds of professionals from around the country. Each time I assist with training, I get refreshed and rejuvenated in my work with couples. The second experience that comes to mind is my private practice work with Still Waters Professional Counseling in Muncie, Indiana. At Still Waters I worked with an amazing group of colleagues from various backgrounds (psychology, mental health, social work). My colleagues and I were committed to bringing high caliber psychotherapy to the community of Muncie.

I learned many things while working there both related to therapy and the business side of being in private practice. I also felt deeply impacted by my clients. It was special to work with courageous individuals and couples each day that took risks to better themselves and fight for their most important relationships.

**Are there any populations that you especially enjoy working with in counseling?**

I find that I enjoy working with a broad range of people. I look forward to gaining more experience with diverse individuals and couples through my practicum opportunities at Ball State.

**What do you hope to do after you graduate?**

Well, I really hope to hit the lottery and become a full-time philanthropist. In the meantime I want to pursue a career in academia. I would like to work in a program that is interested in couple and family psychology. In addition to working as a professor I would like to re-establish myself in private practice on a part-time basis. I don’t ever want to get too far away from the therapy room.

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Nick Lee, doctoral student in the Department of Counseling Psychology and Guidance Services
By: Erin Sadler, M.A.

Yoga has been practiced for thousands of years. It can improve your flexibility, strength, and posture. It has been shown to reduce chronic conditions such as asthma, back pain, arthritis and insomnia. What you may not know, is that it can also improve your mental health! Yoga can help the body naturally feel more energetic and can improve concentration and focus. Using yoga to relieve stress can help improve your quality of sleep and reduce anxiety. Regular practice of yoga can help develop and increase your self-esteem and self-worth.

I know what you are thinking… “I’m at work all day, I don’t have time to do yoga,” or “I’m busy taking care of my children and family.” I know we are all busy with our daily lives and our work takes up a big chunk of our day or night. Whether you are a stay at home parent, work at a desk, or are on your feet all day, there are some quick yoga techniques that you can do at work or at home. For those of you thinking about a new career or making a career change, yoga is a good tool for clearing your mind and refocusing. For those of you who are on the go and don’t think you have time for a full yoga routine and those of you thinking about a new career, take a break from work and the world to try out some of these short yoga exercises.

For a simple arm stretch, stand up and clasp your hands behind your back (or hold a scarf or sweater) and lift your arms as high as you can. Hold this pose for 30 seconds, relax, breathe deeply, and repeat.

To stretch your arms and back, interlock your fingers and with your palms facing up, extend your arms over your head and stretch from your waist. Hold this pose for 30 seconds then relax, breathe deeply, and repeat.

For a lower back stretch, sit on the front half of a chair and widen your legs so they are more than hip distance apart. Bend forward at your hips and allow your body to relax. Round your back and drop your head to completely relax your neck. Hold this pose as long as you like. After each exhale allow your body to relax even more. Inhale and sit up. Wait a few moments and repeat.

For more yoga exercises to do at work, visit: http://ishtayoga.com/articles/61.

Balancing life with work and family can be tough, and improving physical and mental health may not be at the top of your list of priorities. Get a group of coworkers together to take a “yoga break.” Round up your family to do some yoga during commercial breaks. I encourage you to take a few minutes out of your day to do a couple of simple yoga exercises to boost your energy, concentration, and focus, and generally relieve stress from the workplace and life in general.
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Ball State University Counseling Practicum Clinic:
Serving the Community Since 1969

Mission
- The clinic is a training and research facility for the Department of Counseling Psychology and Guidance Services.

- The clinic provides high-quality, low-cost psychological services to the Delaware County community and beyond.

Service Providers
- Over 50 graduate student counselors under the supervision of faculty.

- Faculty supervisors are licensed psychologists and counselors.

Services Offered
- Individual Counseling
- Couple Counseling
- Family Counseling
- Child/Adolescent Counseling
- Group Counseling with a focus on:
  - Parenting
  - Social skills
  - Anger control
  - Issues of concern to children and adolescents

Hours of Operation
- August-May (Spring & Fall)
  9 AM to 9 PM M-Th
  9 AM to 12 PM Fri

- May-August (Summer)
  9 AM to 8 PM M-Th
  Closed on Friday

The clinic is closed during university vacations and holidays.

All clients have the right to receive timely, competent counseling services consistent with the ethical principles and guidelines established by professional organizations. All counseling services provided at the Counseling Practicum Clinic are guided by the Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct, the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice of the American Counseling Association, the American School Counseling Association, the American Rehab Counseling Association, the General Guidelines for Providers of Psychological Services, and the Specialty Guidelines for the Delivery of Services by Counseling Psychologists.