

From the Heart...

...Lifeskills for Today's Family
By Sharon L. Benedict MS



Career skills that help you shine!

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, March 7, 2014)

What do you think makes you shine at your job and career? Are there key skills you brought to the job or has your “know-how” demonstrate a natural bent you have? For most of us it is really a combination of natural talent, personality, training, and encouragement.

There are seventeen foundation skills needed no matter what career you may choose. Lawrence K. Jones of Career Keys™ offers a comprehensive summary with details on each skill (http://www.careerkey.org/asp/career_development/foundation_skills.asp). These 17 foundation skills are absolutely required in our nation's 21st century high-performance workplaces. Included in the *Basic Skills* are reading, writing, mathematics, speaking, and listening. *Thinking Skills* include creative thinking, problem-solving, decision-making skills, and visualization. *People Skills* cover social, negotiation, leadership, teamwork, and cultural diversity. *Personal Qualities* include self-esteem, self-management, and responsibility.

I encourage you to visit Career Keys website to read about each skill. Reading about each skill will be very helpful in completing the following exercise. Once you have looked them over, how about scoring yourself on those skills. In addition, decide how

you will commit yourself to improving your score on any of the skills and set a date for taking action. The following chart will help you do just that. Even if you have given yourself a score of 5 (highest) for all skills, consider ways you can become even more adept in each area.

| Skill Category | Skill Subcategory | Score (1 lowest, 5 highest) | I commit to improving my score by: (include date for taking action) |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|--|--|
| Basic Skills: | Reading | | |
| | Writing | | |
| | Mathematics | | |
| | Speaking | | |
| | Listening | | |
| Thinking Skills | Creative thinking | | |
| | Problem-solving skills | | |
| | Decision-making skills | | |
| | Visualization | | |
| People Skills | Social | | |
| | Negotiation | | |
| | Leadership | | |
| | Teamwork | | |
| | Cultural diversity | | |
| Personal Qualities | Self-esteem | | |
| | Self-management | | |
| | Responsibility | | |

What skill areas shined for you and which ones need improvement? Talk with a trusted friend or family member about the results. Invite your friend to participate in scoring themselves as well. Then have a fun, respectful conversation about your outcomes. You may discover creative ways to help each other shine even more than you already do in your career or job. Feel free to bring this exercise to your boss if you think they may be receptive to the staff also going through the exercise. And by all

means, either have a group discussion (respectful, of course) or have each employee consider talking with the boss about ways to improve your skills in certain areas. And make sure you offer compliments to each other on skills that shine. No one wants to hear only areas where we need to improve ourselves. Balance it with acknowledging their important contributions to the job and career workplace.

At Career Keys, there are also a variety of powerful tools for professionals helping youth and adults—for choosing a career, a college major, career key tests, and more (<http://www.careerkey.org/>). Next article will focus on college/training prep for that dream career you want.

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From the Heart...

...Lifeskills for Today's Family
By Sharon L. Benedict MS



College to Career, not always a straight line **Part 1**

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, March 14, 2014)

If there were only two driving components (which there are not) for choosing a career and college to prepare you, these pieces of advice would be those two.

“Do not hire a man who does your work for money, but him who does it for love of it.” Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862)

Nothing in this world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful people with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts.

Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent. The slogan ‘press on’ has solved and always will solve the problems of the human race.” Calvin Coolidge (1872-1933)

Think of any natural and acquired skill or talent. Unless you love what you are doing and instill in your heart and soul the gift of persistence with purpose, your college and career skills demonstrated will only leave you unsatisfied and unfulfilled in life. This is true for us all. Persistence without passion only wears you out. Passion without persistence and purpose only leaves you unrewarded, and more often left behind.

So, where do you start to find your college and career fit? Begin with a heart-to-heart with yourself and even a family member. Have you had a dream lingering in the

closet for awhile or an interest that has followed you? Keep in mind that a dream or interest floating around may or may not necessarily be “THE” college or career for you. Yet, it may be the time to decide one way or the other. Dreams and interests will always be around, and many make wonderful hobbies rather than a career. They also may be a temporary jumping off point for that career coming your way.

One of the more sure ways to find out is knowing your personality style. You will serve yourself well now and in the future in nurturing relationships and your career prospects by taking the time to learn how you are put together. Did you know your personality style is not only developed by your environment and life experience, but is actually driven to some extent by your genes?

Aleksandr Kogan, Ph.D. (Psychology Today, Nov 30, 2011) offers his perspective with this question, *Is Your Personality in Your Genes? Can genes tell us who you are?* “To a certain extent, it is true that genes lay the foundation for who we are. After all, human beings are biological creatures (we are not rocks) and genes are the building blocks of our biological hardware. Our minds are fundamentally predicated on the existence of this biological hardware, so our genes are foundations for who we are . . . Ultimately, many genes are going to be involved in creating the biological hardware that supports any particular personality trait or behavioral pattern. . . Even more critically, there are many, many non-genetic factors that are going to influence who we are. Our early childhood experiences, our current relationships, what happened 10 minutes ago, who we are interacting with—all of these variables play a crucial role in molding how we act and who we are. Any particular gene is only a single thread pulling you in a particular direction; there are many other threads that are also pulling you in

one direction or another. How these many threads weave together is complex and poorly understood, but it is this precise weaving that ultimately results in who a person is.”

So, here we are back to the “nature, nurture” paradigm that makes you who you are. Whether 16 years old just beginning to check out your college/career options or 60 years old still on the career road least traveled or one traveled by many of us, the questions to answer are the same. Do you love what you are doing? Are you ready to “press on” in your choice of college and career no matter how long it takes?

Each day brings new opportunities and challenges, testing your passion, purpose, and motivation to “press on.” With this in mind, the next article will get into a few personality style tools available to help decipher where you just might want to travel on your college/career journey. May your journey, if not a straight line, be one that instills the needed passion, purpose, and persistence to get where you are destined to arrive.

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From the Heart...

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College to Career . . . not always a straight line, part 2

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, March 21, 2014)

When going from college to career, each day brings new opportunities and challenges, testing your passion, purpose, and motivation to “press on.” With this in mind, one of the key drivers of our career choices is our personality behavioral style. There are many personality style tools available to help decipher where you just might want to travel on your college/career journey.

There are many personality behavioral style tools available today. Choosing one that works for you in your situation, whether personal or professional, can get confusing. There are short tests and very long ones as well. Some can take about 10 minutes, others an hour or more. And taking a personality assessment also depends on the situation. Are you focused on personal/home life or work. Getting your mindset anchored in the situation when completing the assessment is an important factor is the results you will see.

Yet, it is my belief as a DISC personality system facilitator for many years (<http://celebratingyourjourney.com/disc.htm>), your primary personality style will usually always show itself, along with a secondary and possibly a tertiary blend of personality. That means although you may have certain behavioral styles similar to others, you are still very much unique as to how they are combined and demonstrated in your life and

circumstances. Also, it is so very important to avoid the temptation to label yourself or others with a particular personality style in any negative context.

Every personality style has its strengths and areas in need of improvement, primarily in the way we all communicate with each other. And any results that seem to be a little fuzzy or flat-line often reflects you are going through some significant environmental changes and are attempting to adapt to those changing circumstances, whatever they may be.

We all let our emotions and self-defensive tendencies often get in the way of respectful and open communications. So, although knowing your personality style is very important when determining your college/career choices, people are not the sum of their personality types. And hard labeling can, in fact, hinder rather than help. So, consider any tool you decide to use as just that, simply a tool to learn a little more about yourself and the impact personality blends have on the choices you make. As often stated, personality types are meant to describe us, never define us.

Below are links to a few personality style systems, from DISC's 4 to Myers-Briggs 16 further classifications. Feel free to check out the many other versions built on these two. Then you have just 3—the Introverts, Extroverts & Ambiverts. There are also a myriad of so-called “Love Languages,” “Birth Order,” and “Learning Styles.” Which ones have you already given a try?

<http://kindredgrace.com/personality/>

http://www.personalitypathways.com/type_inventory.html

<https://www.discinsights.com/disc-test#.UyCTDIWviHE>

<http://www.careerkey.org/pdf/Personality-College-Major-Match-Professionals-Guide.pdf>.

The Career Key source claims that their Holland Personality types “are strong predictors of the majors students choose, and the impact of this choice lasts far beyond student learning and success in college—job stability, salaries earned, job satisfaction, and career opportunities.” They also claim students are more likely to earn higher grades, persist in their choice of major, graduate on time, and be more satisfied and successful in their career. Career Key also cautions that a significant number of students choose a major not “congruent” with their personality. Student end up studying topics that do not match their interests, skills, or values.

Whichever personality system you choose to try, may your discovery about yourself, college, and career choices, if not a straight line, be one that again instills the needed passion, purpose, and persistence to get where you are destined to arrive. Next article will offer resources for more specific colleges and career paths.

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From the Heart...

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College to Career . . . not always a straight line, part 3

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, March 28, 2014)

When trying to choose the right college to meet your personal or professional goals, the territory out there can be daunting. In today's competitive job market, there are a number of factors to consider before making a final decision.

Some of the basic things to assess is whether you want in the 21st century to do online or classroom courses, or a combination of the two. That choice will naturally depend on the major or area of study you choose. Your area of study will also determine to a great extent the length of time you will be in school (two years, four years, post-graduate years), the type of college (public, private, community) you are interested in; and, of course, the location of the college.

For some students, being close to home is preferred. Others tend to be the adventurous type and live in a whole new community. The cost between going to a local community college and a university across the nation or globe creates a wide spread of expenses. Your parents may have been saving up for years so you can go to that ivy-league school far from home. For most students, seeking scholarships, grants, and college loans are the more common routes paying for college.

Among many other online resources, College Week Live (collegeweeklive.com) offers some help, starting with a list of questions to answer before starting your search.

Academic questions

- What do you hope to achieve in college?
- What do you hope to do for work after you graduate?
- How important is it to have dialogue and personal attention from your professors?
- Do you prefer a highly structured academic environment or prefer a curriculum that allows for more independent projects?
- What degree of academic challenge is best for you? (In other words, do you prefer to be surrounded by highly competent students, even if they receive better grades than you or is being near the top of your class important to you?)
- Do you know what you want to major in? Do you think your major may change?
- If you're not sure of your major, what topics are you most passionate about learning about?
- What special programs interest you?

Lifestyle questions

- What geographic location do you prefer?
- Do you prefer a rural, small town, suburban, or urban setting?
- Do you prefer a coeducational or a single sex institution?
- What type of student activities are you interested in?
- What athletic programs interest you?
- What type of social environment do you prefer?

- What type of housing do you require?
- Are there certain medical and other support services you'll need?

Financial questions

- How much can you comfortably afford to spend? (This shouldn't limit your choices too much at this point, as some higher-cost institutions have more generous financial packages.)
- Will you need financial aid?
- Are work-study programs of interest to you?
- Do you plan to work during school?

College Week Live recommends you talk with those who know you well, such as your teacher, guidance counselor, and family members. And begin to explore your options with those who already are working in areas of study you are checking on. Then start researching colleges online. College Week Live has a search database with more than 300 colleges listed that can help you match your desired characteristics. You will then be able to also find out about admissions, student life, academic offerings, costs, and financial aid.

When you start to narrow the college/area of study down, make sure you have a list of questions to ask a college representative online, by phone, and in person, if possible. Find a student forum where current students can give their perspective and experience so far. Some of the questions to ask students include “Why did you choose this college?”, “What's the transition like from high school to college?”, “What do you do with your free time here?”, “How safe is the campus?” and “What would you change about the school?” If possible, ask for a list of alumni to contact for input.

College Week Live hosts live chat sessions and fairs for many colleges on a regular basis. If possible, take tour of a few college campuses. But before you start taking those tours, here are just a few of many additional online resources to cruise through.

<https://www.scholarships.com/resources>

<http://www.anycollege.com/resourcecenter/choosing-a-college>

http://www.educationmatch.us/college_finder/

<http://degree-match.net/>

Keep in mind, although online resources are great, there isn't anything more revealing that talking and meeting with real people...faculty, students, staff of any campus.

As covered in the past two articles, choosing a college and career has everything to do with your personality behavioral style. Check out previous articles for resources for taking a personality style assessment to achieve the perfect fit for your career and life. May the college and career you choose be everything you thought it would be and even more!

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