

Building Your Best Life:

A Workbook for Character and Career Development

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About this workbook

In this workbook, you will embark on a journey of self-discovery and career exploration, using your character strengths as your guide.

This workbook is based on findings from our research at the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues at the University of Birmingham which have shown that by considering our character strengths when making career decisions, we are more likely to experience a higher level of objective (e.g., financial security, physical health) and subjective (e.g., perceived well-being, meaning and purpose) flourishing later on. This research can be found here:

<https://tinyurl.com/careerwisdomstudy1>

In this workbook, you will also have the opportunity to learn from the experiences of professionals who have already had the chance to make career decisions at school and/or university. In their own words, you will learn what they wish they knew when they were making career decisions and what wisdom they have gained along the way. This will provide valuable insight and guidance as you explore your own job/career options.

The early activities in this workbook are designed to help you understand yourself, your character, and what kind of work-life balance you want. You will explore your character strengths and identify which ones are most important to you, as well as which ones you would like to develop in the future. You will also learn about the importance of work-life balance and how to take this into account when making career decisions.

Next, you will explore the different types of careers that are available to you, including their pros and cons, as well as the personal qualities needed to succeed in each. This will help you to better understand the types of careers that are a good fit for the character strengths and values you aspire to uphold, and the lifestyle you would like to cultivate.

By the end of this workbook, we hope that you will have a clearer understanding of who you are, who you want to be, and what types of careers are the best fit for you. With this knowledge, you will be ready to create a plan for a fulfilling and

successful career. We encourage you to approach this workbook with an open mind and a willingness to reflect on your experiences and what is important to you. By taking the time to understand your career choices in the context of your overall personal development, you will be able to make informed career decisions that we hope will be conducive to a more fulfilling and meaningful life.

So, grab a pen and paper (*you'll see orange exercise lightbulbs like this one throughout*) and let's get started!



We hope that this workbook will be a valuable resource as you explore your career options and start to think about your future.

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Foreword

Important concepts have long histories. Consider the etymology of the term 'virtue': its first syllable is the Latin for 'man' in the gendered sense of 'masculine human being', not the ungendered 'humanity'. In a language more ancient than Latin, namely Sanskrit, 'vir' means 'hero'. In 'Proto-Indo-European', the ancestral language from which the Indo-European languages descend, a word close to 'vir' meant a warrior, a man (masculine) of courage and determination. An echo of these meanings lies in the term some colonisers of North America used in describing the native American warriors who resisted their invasion: 'braves'.

So 'virtue' originally meant 'manliness', the character of a warrior. But at a crucial moment in the cultural history of Western civilization, the idea of virtue evolved; although 'warrior virtues' have remained a necessity in times of danger and conflict, the far more important idea of 'civic virtues' – cooperation, responsibility, kindness, community – and in particular the virtues of character – concerned with what sort of person one is, living with wisdom, benevolence and probity – came to be the dominant meaning. That crucial moment was the rise of philosophy in classical Greece, where ethics (from ancient Greek 'ethos' meaning 'character') took centre-stage in thought.

The detachment of the idea of what is good in the way of 'being human' from just 'being masculine' was a great advance. A more sexist age might describe the advance as resulting from the importation into the idea of 'what is good' of what have traditionally been regarded as distinctive feminine characteristics of care and concern for others; indeed, in some versions of feminist ethics today the idea of 'care' plays a fundamental role. But as it developed in ethical thought from classical antiquity onwards, following the contributions of Aristotle, the concept of virtue ceased to be gendered and became general – to ethical thought itself, and thereby to humanity.

At its core, virtue ethics concerns considerations of character and how we live our lives. In common parlance, talk of virtue often suggests piety and puritanism, quite a reversal in comparison to the bold warrior ideals of the ancient meaning. There

is an influential philosopher who thought it was a bad thing that a prim version of virtue had usurped bold warrior virtue: that was Friedrich Nietzsche. But another way to see the change from warrior virtues to civic virtues is this: not as a change from boldness to primness, but a change from a society run by bullies to one where people get along with each other on a basis of mutual concern and respect – and if they deserve the respect they get, it is because of their characters.

The quality of one's life is determined by one's character. Thinking about how to live a worthwhile life requires self-understanding and the cultivation of our individual best traits and talents. This kind of wise thinking enables us to make good choices, good choices about how to be and what to do, which in turn enables both ourselves and the society we live in to flourish. Humans are social animals, and therefore good relationships are a key part of flourishing lives; but our individual responsibility – to others, and to ourselves – lies at the base of it all. That is why thinking about the virtues is so profoundly important.

Thinking about the virtues is also important in the context of our careers. Given the amount of time spent at work, the kind of career one chooses, and the reasons for such choices, will impact our virtuous character development. Since virtue ethics considers virtues and, relatedly, good character to contribute to and partly constitute a flourishing life, choosing the right career for the right reasons is also important for flourishing.

The cutting-edge research which informs this workbook supports the importance of the virtues for making choices about our careers. By investigating the relationship between career-related decision-making and flourishing, the moral philosophers and moral psychologists involved in the study found a clear connection between virtue ethical thinking and leading flourishing lives. By providing practical tools and guidance, this workbook enables those making career-related decisions to infuse their reasoning with considerations about virtue. It is just the kind of resource that is needed to help young people build better lives and better societies through the career choices they make – I wholeheartedly endorse it.

**AC Grayling, CBE, DPhil (Oxon), FRSA, FRSL
Master, Northeastern University, London**

Who I Am

Understanding who you are today is an important first step to understanding who you wish to become. In this section of the workbook, we will dive into the core of your personality. By understanding your personality, you will gain a deeper insight into your motivations, values, and strengths. This will be a crucial step in finding a career that aligns with your character and brings out the best in you. You will also explore the influences that have shaped your personality, both positive and negative, and examine what makes you unique. By the end of this section, you will have a clearer understanding of your personality and how you are similar or different to others.

Understanding My Personality

Psychologists have studied the differences between individual people and what these differences mean in real life (and yes, including at work!) for about 150 years. It is not an exact science, but it is nonetheless useful to consider when thinking about how we might be similar or different to others. In this section, we will draw upon the science of behaviour to think about how our individuality might make us better suited to some careers compared to others.

Personality

There are five main aspects of personality, often referred to as “The Big Five”. Below, we explain what these are, and how they relate to different careers. Our personalities change subtly throughout our lives, but how we compare with others now tends to be roughly how we will compare to others later on in life too. This is useful to take into account when thinking about which careers will bring the best out of us. You don't “have” one personality type or another (e.g., “I am an Extrovert”), but rather, everyone has each of these to different degrees (e.g., “I am more Extroverted than 35% of people”). Take a look below and think about how you might compare to others along each dimension:

Openness

People who are more Open are curious about the world around them. They might be especially interested in debating ideas and enjoy reading books. Open people are more likely to be artistic, sociable, or unconventional.

At work, they are the change-makers, putting their imagination, curiosity, and creativity to good use as entrepreneurs, artists, writers, or even professors. They are less likely to enjoy jobs that are repetitive or assigned by other people.

Being creative and unconventional can be a double-edged sword. Most systems that are currently set up are complicated (e.g., the economy, or a house of cards), and it is much easier to make them worse than better - so we have to innovate with care. Additionally, in any creative endeavours, a small number of people tend to be disproportionately successful – these are often high-risk, high-reward professions. If you enter a purely creative profession, be prepared to try and try again. Or perhaps it could be practical to take a creative position within an existing business (e.g., a content developer/strategist within a larger company like Google).

Conscientiousness

Conscientious people are hard-working and orderly. They persevere towards goals when it is difficult (sometimes called “grit”) and avoid distractions. They enjoy routine and predictability.

At work, Conscientious people run things day-to-day, crossing every “t”. They are more likely to persist with repetitive tasks without getting bored and skipping over important details. Conscientiousness is typically associated with jobs like computer science, law, and accountancy, but it is an asset in most jobs for most people, and can be improved with practice, one step at a time.

Extraversion

People who are more Extroverted are assertive and socially outgoing. These people start the day with zero energy bars but charge up with each social interaction. People who are low in Extraversion (i.e., “Introverts”) begin the day fully charged up and lose an energy bar with each social interaction.

At work, more Extroverted people cultivate their social circles to gain unique opportunities. This is especially advantageous in people-facing roles, such as sales, customer services, or politics. Those who are more Extroverted are also more likely to be assertive and make their voice heard, which can be advantageous.

Agreeableness

Agreeable people are compassionate and polite. They empathise with others and understand their perspectives (sometimes called “emotional intelligence”), are cooperative, and are less likely to engage in conflict.

Agreeable people are more likely to gravitate towards caregiving professions, in the broadest sense, including

the medical professions (e.g., nursing, veterinary science) and the teaching professions.

While Agreeableness can be an advantage in some professions, adding to our “likeability”, it can sometimes be a disadvantage to be polite and avoid conflict at work. For example, it could be difficult to be a successful lawyer if you really dislike argumentation.

Negative Emotionality

Negative Emotion is what protects us from danger. People who are high in Negative Emotion are more likely to avoid threatening situations, perceive more risks, are more emotionally reactive, and are more prone to anxiety and depression.

At work, people who have higher Negative Emotion are more prone to burnout and stress. Negative Emotionality is not associated with any particular career area, however if you think you are higher in this trait than most other people, a high-stress job may be less suitable for you unless you are very passionate about it and have a good work-life balance and enough social support.

1. For each of the five dimensions of personality, compare and contrast your personality with others you went to school with or on your university course. What percentage of people your age do you think you score higher than for each of these?
2. Sometimes we can deceive ourselves, of course! You might also ask a person who knows you well to answer the question above about you.

Personality vs. Character

Knowing what makes you tick is the first step to making career decisions that are right for you in the long term.

Personality refers to the qualities that make a person unique. It includes things like how you think, feel, and act.



Some people are more outgoing and energetic, while others are more reserved and introspective. Personality is influenced both by genetics and the environment you grew up in. A personality trait, on the other hand, is a relatively stable pattern of thought, emotion, and behaviour that makes a person unique. Personality traits are often thought of as being more about how a person thinks, feels, and behaves on a personal level, rather than about their moral or ethical values.

Character, on the other hand, is about the moral and ethical values that guide a person's behaviour. It's about how you treat other people and make decisions. Some people have good character if they are honest, kind, and responsible. Other people might have poor character if they lie, cheat, or don't care about others. Character is something that we have more control over, because it's largely to do with the *choices* you make. A **virtue** is a positive quality or trait that is valued as part of good character. Virtues are often considered to be moral or ethical values that guide a person's behaviour. Examples of virtues might include honesty, kindness, responsibility, compassion, and courage.

We will return to the idea of virtues later in this workbook. For now, it is time to pause for thought and reflect on your personality...

PAUSE FOR THOUGHT...

Personality is relatively stable once we reach roughly age 25. However, it is possible to work on changing our personalities. The key is to do things that a person with a particular personality would do. For example, if you want to be more Extraverted, you might put yourself in more social situations. Over time, people who do this become more extraverted.

Think about your initial ideas about which jobs or careers that might interest you, where your strengths lie, and which subjects you enjoy being challenged in. Which kinds of personality traits might be advantageous or disadvantageous and why? We will return to this later in this workbook too.

Understanding My Influences

Your Role Models

Think about somebody you look up to. This does not have to mean that you look up to them as a professional. It could simply mean someone you look up to as a character. They might be someone you know such as a close friend, or it could be someone you have never met.

Think about the *virtues* they might show (see pages 10-11). Perhaps they are good moral characters who are kind, honest, courageous, or humble. They could be smart, showing curiosity, sound judgement, resourcefulness, and work autonomously. Maybe they are high-performers who are determined, resilient, work well in teams, or are good leaders. Or perhaps they contribute to the greater good, volunteering their time for others, serving the community, or promoting social justice.

1. Writing can help us to distil our thinking and reflect more deeply. One way to do this would be to write a letter to this person thanking them for what they do and who they are.
2. Create a presentation or speech (or website or podcast etc. – feel free to get creative!) to your class highlighting the virtues your role model shows.

My Roots

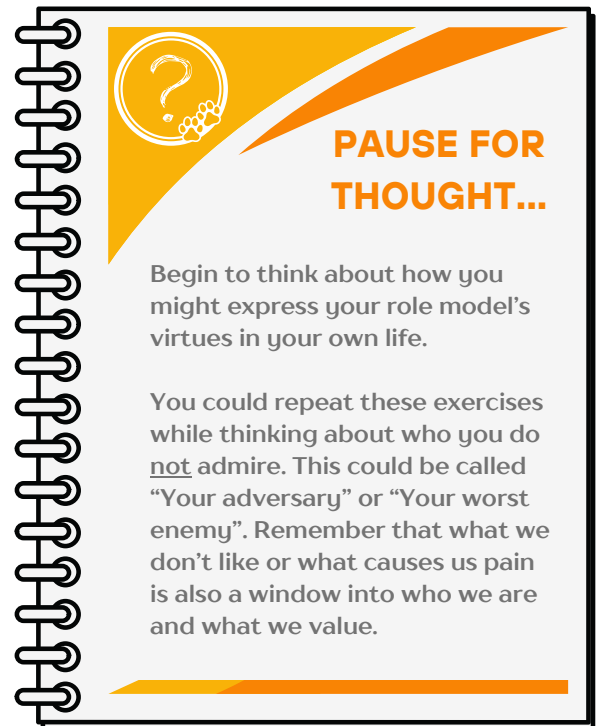
Now that you have thought about who you are currently, it can be useful to consider *why* you are that way. In the previous section, you compared yourself to other individuals in your school/university. To understand yourself more deeply, have a think about the social environments that shaped who you are today and compare those with others.

My family

Try to reflect upon your family's values. "Family" can mean different things to different people (siblings, parents, foster parents, especially close friends etc.). For purposes of this exercise, think about the people you are closest with, with whom you spend/have spent most of your time, and who influence who you are most directly. Which characteristics does your family reward or respond well to?

In general, does your family reward hard work, good humour, or perhaps honesty? Or maybe your answer is "it depends" – perhaps your father likes to tell jokes but your best friend especially values creativity and art?

Think about which of these have influenced you the most, for better or worse. Are there any family members that you are quite like, or that you admire, or that you dislike and want to avoid emulating? How did your family shape who you are and what you care about? Are there any values you want to bring with you into your career or into your life more broadly?



A graphic designed to look like a spiral-bound notebook. The top left corner features a yellow triangle with a white question mark icon. The text "PAUSE FOR THOUGHT..." is written in bold orange letters. Below this, two paragraphs of text are presented in a clean, sans-serif font. The bottom of the graphic has a yellow horizontal bar.

PAUSE FOR THOUGHT...

Begin to think about how you might express your role model's virtues in your own life.

You could repeat these exercises while thinking about who you do not admire. This could be called "Your adversary" or "Your worst enemy". Remember that what we don't like or what causes us pain is also a window into who we are and what we value.

1. What are your family's top three values? Are these the same for you?
2. Which values do you think your family do not appreciate quite as much as you do?



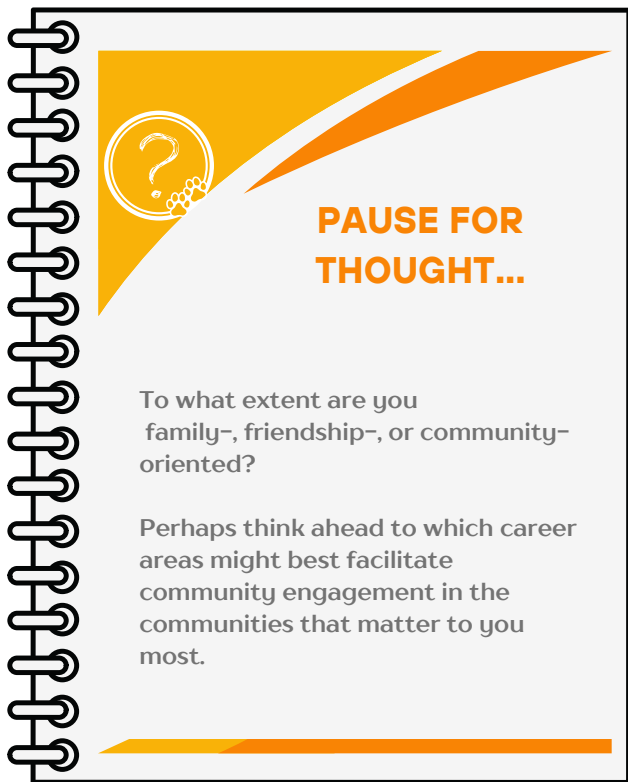
My community

Your community includes the people who live in the same place as you. This might include your direct neighbours, or people in the same village, town, or city. Your community might also be based on a shared characteristic or interest, such as a community of Irish people in an English city, or a gay community, an online community with a shared interest, or a religious community.

The communities we engage in and identify with have particular characteristics, values, and behaviours that other communities might not. Together, these form the cultures that help shape who we are. Some people value their culture and background, while others want to get away from these cultures as fast as they possibly can!

We all fit into multiple communities, and sometimes the values of these communities can conflict. For example, maybe our friends at school have different values than our families do.

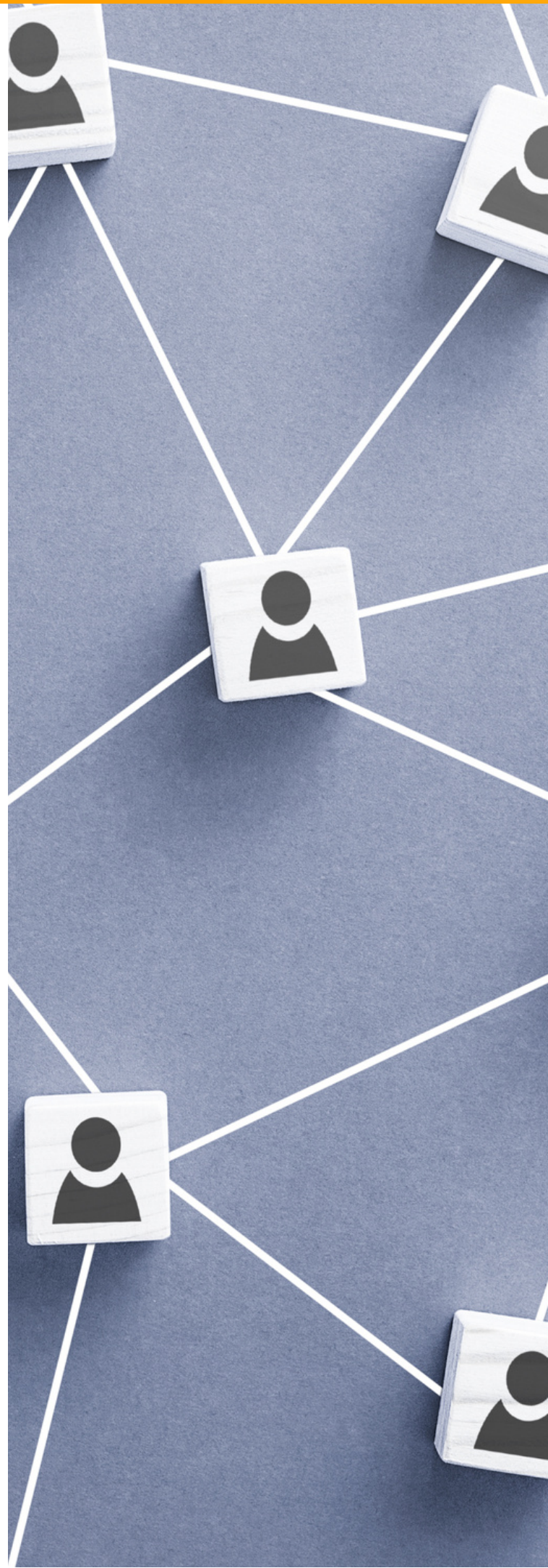
1. In which respects are you *the same as others in your community*, and in which respects are you different?
2. What is *one thing you could do within the next week to help someone from your community who is similar to you?*



PAUSE FOR THOUGHT...

To what extent are you family-, friendship-, or community-oriented?

Perhaps think ahead to which career areas might best facilitate community engagement in the communities that matter to you most.



Who I Wish to Be

In this section of the workbook, we will focus on helping you to understand and develop your character strengths. By identifying your existing strengths, you will be able to leverage them in your career and personal life. Additionally, you will have the opportunity to explore which strengths you may wish to develop in the future. This will be a crucial step in setting goals for personal and professional growth, and finding a career that allows you to utilize and enhance your strengths. By the end of this section, we hope you will have a clear understanding of your current character strengths and a plan for developing the strengths that are important to you.

The Life Wheel

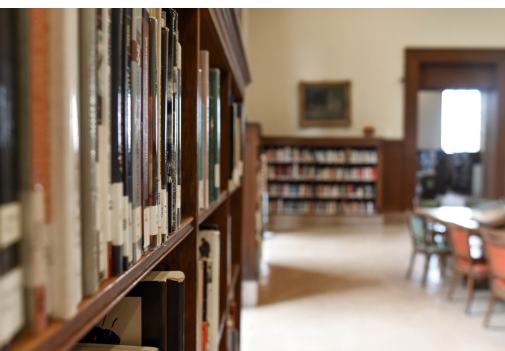
To do this exercise, start by drawing a circle on a piece of paper and dividing it into 8 equal sections (see next page), like the spokes of a wheel. Then, in each section, write one of the following areas of life:

- Family and relationships
- Friends and social life
- School and education
- Hobbies and interests
- Physical health and fitness
- Mental health and well-being
- Personal goals and aspirations
- Career and future plans

Next, think about how satisfied you are with each area of your life, and rate it on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being very dissatisfied and 10 being very satisfied). You can do this by writing the number in the corresponding section of the wheel.

Finally, look at your Life Wheel and reflect on what it shows about what has been important to you in your life so far. You could think about which areas are rated high and which are rated low, and consider why this might be. For example, if your relationships with family and friends are rated high, this might indicate that these things are very important to you. If your personal goals and aspirations are rated low, this might indicate that you haven't given much thought to what you want in the future. Don't worry though - it is never too late to start.

By completing the Life Wheel exercise, you can gain insight into what has been important to you in your life so far and identify areas where you might want to focus more attention in the future. Remember though that the relative importance of some aspects of our lives can change over time too, while others are important throughout.





The Golden Mean of Virtue

Virtues are moral qualities that enable individuals to live good and fulfilling lives. They are habits or dispositions that help us to behave in a way that is morally good and beneficial to ourselves and others. For example, some virtues might include honesty, kindness, fairness, and courage. These are traits that can help us to make good decisions, form strong relationships, and contribute to the well-being of our communities. In short, virtues are the qualities that enable us to be our best selves and live our best lives.

The Golden Mean is Aristotle’s idea that the best way to live a good and fulfilling life is to strive for a balance between the two extremes of excess and deficient virtue. For example, if the virtue of courage is between the extremes of cowardice (deficiency) and recklessness (in excess), then the ideal way to live is to find the right balance between these two extremes. In other words, we should neither be too afraid to take action, nor should we be too quick to act without thinking. Instead, we should try to find a reasonable middle ground, where we are brave enough to do what is right in a given situation for ourselves *and* others, but also careful enough to avoid unnecessary risks. In this way, we can live our lives in a way that is virtuous and fulfilling. The table below provides some examples of virtues (**in bold**), and what these might look like if deficient or in excess.

Virtue Definition	Deficiency	Golden Mean	Excess
The virtue of facing fear, danger, or pain without flinching	Cowardice	Courage	Recklessness
The virtue of telling the truth, being sincere, and trustworthy	Dishonesty	Honesty	Bluntness
The virtue of treating people equally and impartially	Injustice	Fairness	Bias
The virtue of moderating one's desires, especially for pleasure or indulgence	Intemperance	Moderation	Abstinence
The virtue of giving freely to others without expecting anything in return	Stinginess	Generosity	Extravagance
The virtue of being able to endure difficult or frustrating situations without becoming angry or upset	Impatience	Patience	Indifference
The virtue of being gentle, caring, and considerate towards others	Unkindness	Compassion	Martyrdom
The virtue of being modest, unassuming, and respectful of others	Pride	Humility	Self-effacement
The virtue of being thankful and appreciative of what one has received	Ingratitude	Thankfulness	Entitlement
The virtue of letting go of resentment or anger towards someone who has wronged you	Unforgiveness	Mercy	Permissiveness

Virtue Definition	Deficiency	Golden Mean	Excess
The virtue of being faithful and devoted to someone or something	Disloyalty	Loyalty	Obsequiousness
The virtue of continuing to do something despite difficulties or setbacks	Quitting	Determination	Obsession
The virtue of being hardworking and persistent in one's efforts	Laziness	Industriousness	Busy-body
The virtue of showing regard and appreciation for someone or something	Disrespect	Respect	Fanaticism
The virtue of being accountable for one's actions and decisions	Irresponsibility	Dependability	Over-committing
The virtue of being genuine and authentic in one's words and actions	Insincerity	Authenticity	Pretentiousness
The virtue of being able to control one's thoughts, emotions, and actions	Impulsiveness	Self-discipline	Repression
The virtue of being accepting and open-minded towards others, even when they hold different beliefs or opinions	Intolerance	Open-mindedness	Apathy
The virtue of having knowledge, experience, and good judgement	Ignorance	Understanding	Pretentiousness
The virtue of being honest, moral, and consistent in one's values and actions	Hypocrisy	Integrity	Self-righteousness
The virtue of feeling empathy and concern for the suffering of others	Lack of empathy	Sympathy	Pity
The virtue of being able to produce original and imaginative ideas or things	Inability to think outside the box	Innovation	Eccentricity
The virtue of believing in oneself and one's abilities	Insecurity	Confidence	Arrogance
The virtue of caring deeply for others and wanting their happiness	Lack of affection	Affection	Infatuation
The virtue of being able to understand and share the feelings of others	Self-centredness	Compassion	Over-involvement

The Life Wheel Revisited



Now that you have learned a little more about the virtues, we can begin to think about which virtues are important for each aspect of the Life Wheel you completed earlier. For each aspect of life, consider three virtues you need to work on to flourish and be the best version of yourself, along with what an excess or deficiency would look like for each.

Aspect of Life	Deficiencies	Golden Means	Excess
Family and relationships	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.
Friends and social life	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.
School and education	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.
Hobbies and interests	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.
Physical health and fitness	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.
Mental health and well-being	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.
Personal goals and aspirations	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.
Career and future plans	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.

Having done this, take a look back at the Life Wheel exercise on page 8 and consider which virtues you should prioritise developing to live a full and meaningful life, factoring in how important each aspect of life is to you.

Write them down in the box below.



How Much Change Am I Capable Of?

In the box below, write about how much you have changed over the past five years. Some things you might think about are:

- How have your personality and values changed?
- How have your interests changed?
- How have your talents changed?
- How much wiser are you now than you were then?
- Did you expect to change quite so much as you have?



Next, think about the future, five years from now. Given how much you have changed over the past five years, how much do you suppose that you could change in the future? What might that look like?

- How could my personality and values change as I move into new settings?
- How might your interests change?
- How might you discover new talents?
- How much wiser could you be in five years than you are now? What might that look like?



Qualities of Character to be Proud Of

Imagine you are at your next milestone birthday party a few years from now (20, 30, 40 – whatever it may be). All of the people you care about most are there. **Who would be on that guest list?** Some of these people you may already know well, and others might be people you have not yet met that you hope will be an important part of your life (e.g., a future spouse, or close friend).



Guest List

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.



Next, think about **who**, from the above list, is most important to you of all. Write a little bit about **why** they are the most important person for you below. You might think about what you admire about them, why you value their opinions, their influence on your character, and how important they are for different aspects of your life, for example.



Now, imagine that the person who is most important to you in the world stands up to make a ten-minute speech about you. **What would you like them to say about the kind of person you are?**

It might be helpful to think back to the "Who I Am" section where you considered your personality and character. You might want them to highlight your kindness, your empathy, and your ability to listen and understand others. You might also want them to talk about your passion for learning and your desire to always improve yourself. Additionally, you might want them to mention your determination and willingness to take on challenges and work hard to overcome them. Overall, you might want this person to paint a picture of you as a compassionate, hardworking, and driven individual who is always striving to be the best version of yourself. What kind of son or daughter have you been? What have you achieved as a member of your community? What sort of friend have you been?

Below, or on a separate sheet of paper, **write out this speech in full**. Spend some time on this to make sure it is as close to what you would find to be ideal as you can get it.



Finally, **identify the virtues** that they highlighted or alluded to in their speech.



About Careers and Jobs

In this section of the workbook, we will explore the many different career options available to you. You will learn about the skills and character strengths that are important for success in each, and consider the fit between who you are now and who you wish to become. You will also learn about the jobs of the future and gain insight into the experiences of professionals who have already pursued their careers. By reflecting on the regrets they had about their career decisions and the advice they would give to their younger selves, you will gain valuable insight into the importance of making informed career decisions. By the end of this section, you will have a clear understanding of the different career options available to you and which ones align with your character strengths and aspirations.

The World Needs Baristas as Much as it Needs Barristers

Our working lives are only one part of what allows us to lead fulfilling lives. For this reason, most people don't make their working life the most central aspect of their lives; they "work to live" rather than "living to work". But what do we mean by this?

Suppose we are awake 16 hours per day and have seven days in the week. That's 112 hours per week that you can budget for every aspect of your life.

Of these 112 hours, most people work 37.5 hours per week. This leaves them with 74.5 hours a week to do other things. People use this time to do things like shower, eat, take breaks, commute to work, spend time with loved ones, go on holiday, or do other things they enjoy. Others might spend a lot of time on social media, watching TV, playing sports, and other leisure activities.

Some people work a lot more than 37.5 hours a week. They might have a job contract that says they only have to work 37.5 hours each week, but they end up working 70 hours per week. This means that they have less time for things like leisure, time with family and friends, and self-care. On the other hand, they *might* make a lot of money and be respected in their field because of their dedication.

There is no straightforward answer to how much time you *should* spend working. It's up to you to decide what is best for you, being mindful of the trade-offs you make. In real life, we all have to do our best to find the right balance for ourselves given our different priorities. Some of these priorities might be the kinds of things covered in this workbook, such as character and career development, but it is important to also be mindful that how much time we dedicate to our jobs or careers can also depend on other factors, such as whether we have caring responsibilities, or unexpected life events that change our direction (more on that on page 30).



Let us consider working patterns, rewards, and the virtues required for two example careers: Baristas and barristers.

Baristas are the friendly faces behind the counter at coffee shops and cafés, providing customers with their daily dose of caffeine and hospitality. They contribute to society by creating a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere, often serving as a gathering place for people from all walks of life to come together and connect. In addition to providing a valuable service: many baristas are also small business owners, contributing to the local economy and supporting their communities. Overall, baristas contribute to society by creating a sense of community and providing a much-needed social and economic resource.

Barristers are a key part of the legal system, providing representation and advocacy for individuals, businesses, and organizations. They help to ensure that the legal system is fair and just, and that the rights of all parties involved in legal proceedings are protected. Barristers may also be involved in public policy development, legal education, and public interest advocacy. Through their work, barristers help to maintain the rule of law and uphold the principles of justice in society, contributing to a more fair and equitable society.

The roles of being a barrister or a barista can overlap in some ways, but can vary greatly in others, as these are two very different careers on the whole. However, some potential benefits of being a barrister might include:

- **Intellectual stimulation:** The practice of law can be challenging and intellectually stimulating, as barristers are required to analyse complex legal issues and provide effective representation to their clients.
- **Professional autonomy:** Barristers are self-employed and have a high degree of control over their work, including which cases they choose to take on and how they conduct their legal practice.
- **High earning potential:** Depending on their area of expertise and level of experience, some barristers can earn a very high income.

Some potential benefits of being a barista might include:

- **Flexible schedule:** Many baristas work part-time or flexible hours, which can be beneficial for those who want to balance their work with other commitments, such as studying or other part-time jobs.
- **Opportunities for personal growth:** Working as a barista can provide opportunities for personal growth, as it often involves interacting with a diverse range of people and developing customer service and other interpersonal skills.
- **Opportunities for advancement:** Some baristas may be able to advance to supervisory or managerial positions within a coffee shop or café, which can provide additional responsibility and potential for career growth.

While *character traits* required to be a successful barrister and a successful barista may overlap in some ways, there are also some key differences.

To be a successful barrister, a person needs to have certain important qualities, like wisdom, courage, and moderation. Wisdom helps them understand complex legal issues and make good decisions. Courage helps them stand up for their clients, even when it's hard. And moderation helps them balance their own interests with their clients' needs and the demands of the law.

To be a successful barista, a person might need different qualities, like patience, industriousness, and friendliness. Patience helps them handle long lines and difficult customers with grace. Industriousness helps them work efficiently and consistently produce high-quality drinks. And friendliness helps them create a welcoming environment for customers and build positive relationships with regulars.

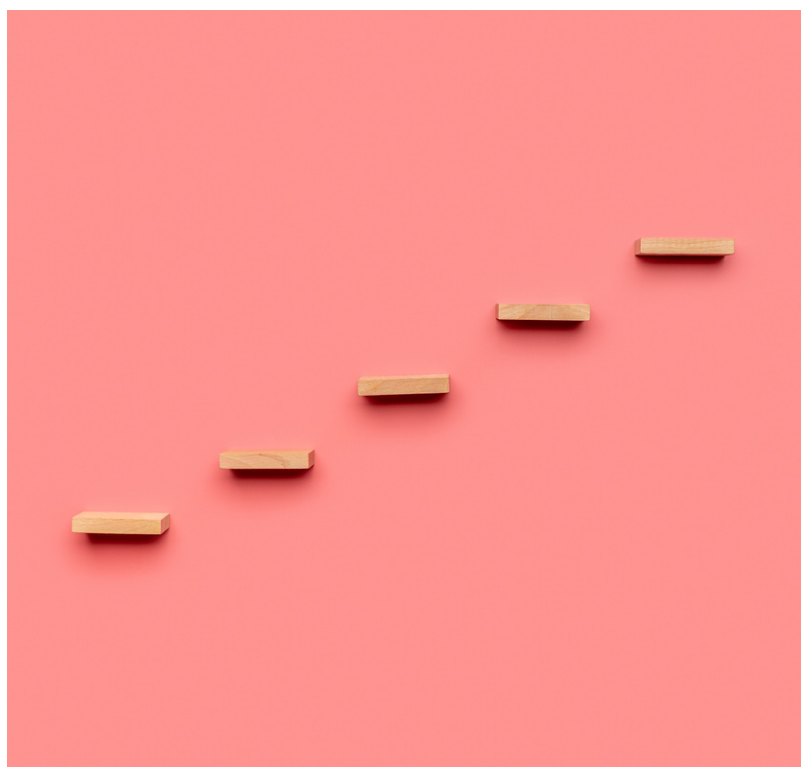
Opportunity Cost

Opportunity cost refers to the potential benefits that a person *gives up* when they choose one option over another. Here are ten different opportunity costs that some people may consider when making career choices:

- **Time:** Choosing a particular career may require a significant amount of time and effort, which could be spent on other activities or pursuits. For example, pursuing a career that requires several years of

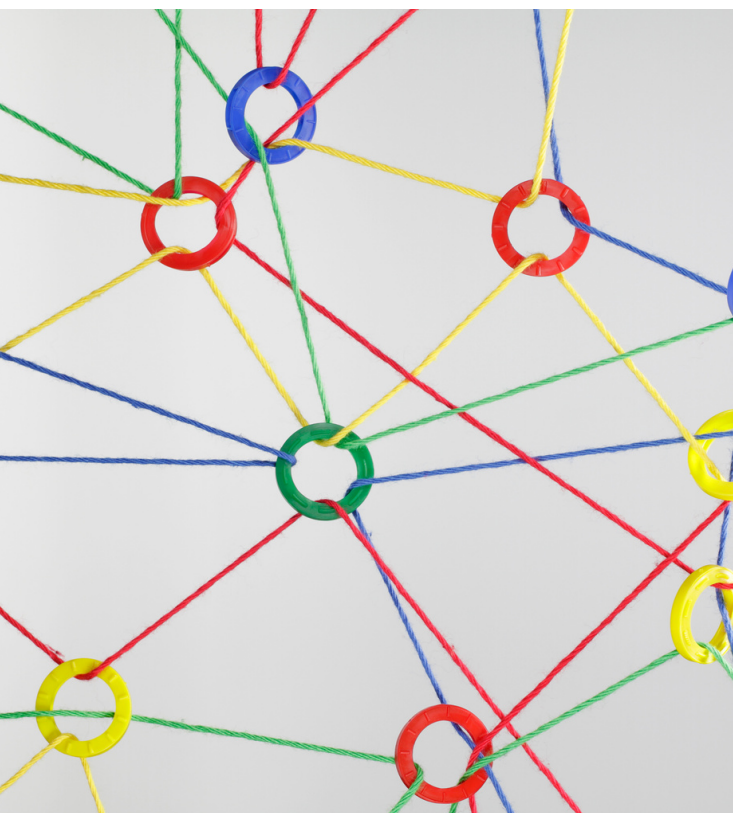
education or training or that requires you to work late regularly may mean having less time for friends and family until you are older.

- **Money:** Some careers may offer higher salaries or other financial benefits, while others may be less lucrative. However, choosing a career with a lower salary doesn't necessarily mean that a person will be financially worse off in the long run. Earning early and investing money wisely and consistently, even if it's a smaller amount, can potentially lead to greater long-term financial growth and allow you to contribute to industries you care about without directly working within them.
- **Personal satisfaction:** Some people may choose a career that they find personally fulfilling, even if it doesn't pay as well as other options. It's important to consider whether a higher salary is worth sacrificing personal satisfaction and enjoyment in one's work.
- **Flexibility:** Some careers may offer more flexibility in terms of working hours or location, while others may be more rigid. This can be an important consideration for those who value having greater work-life balance or the ability to work remotely.
- **Job security:** Some careers may offer more stability and security, while others may be more uncertain or risky. Some jobs can even be very competitive to enter in the first place (e.g., one job for every hundred graduates) meaning it takes years to get a foot in the door. This can be a key factor for those who want a sense of stability in their career.
- **Growth potential:** Some careers may offer more opportunities for advancement or personal growth, while others may have more limited potential. It's important to consider whether a career has room for advancement, opportunities to learn new skills, or to develop your character.



- **Social impact:** Some careers may allow individuals to make a positive impact on society, while others may have less of a social impact. This can be a key factor for those who want to make a difference in the world through their work. Of course, those who have jobs with less societal impact can often contribute to society in other ways, such as volunteering, if they can make enough time.
- **Physical demands:** Some careers may require more physical labour or demanding work conditions, while others may be less physically demanding. This can be an important consideration for those who have physical limitations or prefer less physically demanding work or would prefer not to have physically demanding work once they get older. On the other hand, it can be a great way to stay fit.
- **Mental demands:** Some careers may require more mental effort or problem-solving skills, while others may be less mentally demanding. This can be a key factor for those who prefer careers that challenge them intellectually. Some jobs are also very stressful and emotionally demanding. Many of these jobs can provide people with a sense of meaning and purpose though.
- **Personal relationships:** Choosing a particular career may have an impact on an individual's personal relationships, as it may require a significant amount of time or involve travel or other commitments that could affect their relationships with friends and family. It's important to consider how a career choice might affect personal relationships and find a balance that works for you as an individual.

Overall, there are many different opportunity costs to consider when making a career choice, and it's important for individuals to weigh the pros and cons of each option and choose the one that best aligns with their values, goals, and priorities. Later in this workbook (see p. 24), we will ask you to design your ideal working week – think about opportunity costs when you do this to ensure you design a life you are contented with!



Career Regrets

Here are some things that working professionals in the UK reported regretting about their career choices:

I feel with a bit more confidence and self-belief I could have achieved more in my career. I generally went for roles which were easy to get rather than ones where I could have demonstrated my ability and perhaps developed myself.

I bitterly regret not pushing myself more. I have underachieved quite spectacularly and do not feel positive about myself. This is a basic character flaw.

I have many regrets about my career-related decisions. Mainly, that I didn't have the strength of mind to pursue my aspirational career: estate management. I wish I had not listened to my parents but had listened to my heart.

I wish I had stressed less about progression and focused more on happiness.

I regret previously being driven by the salary of a job rather than my enjoyment in the field.

Given what I know today, I wish I had not taken the decision to prioritise stability over fulfilment so lightly. I should have persevered through those times.

I wish that I hadn't spent so much time focused on work with little thought to my downtime or time with friends, partner, and family. I missed out in many ways and can't get that time back. There has to be a balance.



Advice for Younger Selves

We asked professionals what advice they would give to their younger selves. Here is what they said:

I would have had the courage to grab every opportunity that came my way and explore them completely.

I would grab every opportunity that presented itself. Why?...because if you don't try you're never going to know if you would have succeeded.

I would suggest a gap year, if possible. An opportunity to experience the world and life, outside of [where I was studying].

I would have gone for more promotions because they were available to me but I did not feel confident enough to go for them.

I would do an arts-based degree and would have gotten more work experience before, during and after university to work out what I wanted to do. I would have more confidence in my abilities and work out what my strengths and weaknesses were before starting the course.

I would have been more courageous, applying for jobs that involved greater responsibility but also the chance to develop myself. I feel not doing this in my career has limited my earning potential and meant that my roles have been on the whole repetitive and not very stimulating.

I would have had a better work-life balance.

I would not have stayed in a role for as long as I did and taken the step to change careers sooner.

Different career choice from the very beginning. Still in love with what I should have done.

Searched for something I was passionate about that I could make a career in.

Go for every opportunity I was given, take more risks.

Choose a job in an organisation that does something you believe in and want to be a part of.

I would have followed my original idea and done the more appropriate qualifications. I would have got work experience in my chosen field and possibly I would have avoided university as I was probably more suited to [an] apprenticeship in the roles I liked to do.

I would have taken a gap year before starting work in order to go travelling. Once you start your career it's a lot harder to do.

To seek an occupation that I enjoy that pays reasonably well rather than a high paying job that I dislike.

“ Find the right career and be a specialist in an area you have a passion for. And if you don't find it after a couple of years look again. ”

“ Go with what I'm passionate about and there is clear development ”

“ Don't jump into the first job offered unless your heart tells you it is the right one for you. ”

“ Have some work experience - enables you to get a [better] job and prepares you for going into the workplace full-time. ”

“ Take up every opportunity for self-development as this will be the most important factor in helping you stand out from the crowd. ”

“ Work hard to achieve what you want to do in life. ”

“ Think about what you really enjoy in life and what you could do that has value. ”

“ Follow your gut and do what you enjoy. ”

“ Explore all options. Seek mentors and learn about their experiences. ”

“ To have a clear focus now on the career pathway that you want to follow. Make the next step quickly, so that you rapidly gain practical experience. Accept that you may not get your 'ideal job' and be prepared to compromise. But don't get stuck in a rut or in a job that makes you unhappy. ”

“ Focus on self-fulfilment rather than what will bring most money and status. ”

“ I would have pursued my true interest of music right from the start. ”

“ Take the path you want to take, however hard. If you don't succeed, at least you tried. There is nothing worse than just not knowing whether you could have done a particular thing or not. ”

“ Network, network, network ”

“ Seek a good careers advisor to help you decide what you want to do. ”

“ Find something you enjoy doing then work hard at it, but don't forget to live your life. ”

“ Don't necessarily follow the path that seems pragmatic or practical, rather than romantic or idealistic. ”

“ Give yourself time to truly understand what you want to do and [don't] jump in to something without thinking it through. ”

“ Consider all the options. Just because you have a degree in a certain subject, you don't have to follow a career related to the degree. A degree just gives you more choice. ”

“ Don't just do what other people expect you to do. ”

“ I should have stayed closer to my technical skill set and not followed the seductive path into managerial roles. They were better paid but much less satisfying. ”

Career Areas

In this section, we will have a look at different jobs within different sectors and get you thinking about personal qualities you could seek to develop for each kind of job. Remember that the list below is only a starting point, and the virtues mentioned are just some initial suggestions - many more are likely to be relevant besides. There are many more kinds of jobs out there, many more that do not exist yet but will emerge in the future, not to mention the possibility for self-employment (see <https://tinyurl.com/selfemploymentuk>).

- **Education:** patience, empathy, good communication skills
- **Technology:** problem-solving abilities, attention to detail, adaptability
- **Healthcare:** empathy, compassion, strong work ethic
- **Business:** leadership skills, communication skills, problem-solving abilities
- **Retail:** customer service skills, attention to detail, ability to work well in a team
- **Government:** leadership skills, ability to work well in a team, strong work ethic
- **Non-profit:** empathy, compassion, good communication skills
- **Media:** creativity, adaptability, strong communication skills
- **Hospitality:** customer service skills, attention to detail, ability to work well in a team
- **Construction:** physical strength, attention to detail, problem-solving abilities
- **Law:** justice, discernment, courage, attention to detail
- **Science:** objectivity, openness, patience, attention to detail
- **Agriculture:** strong work ethic, organisation, adaptability
- **Arts:** creativity, compassion, curiosity

A longer list of 30 specific jobs under each area, including some of the virtues required for each, can be found at this QR code (Appendix 1):

Or at: <https://osf.io/gb8qn/>



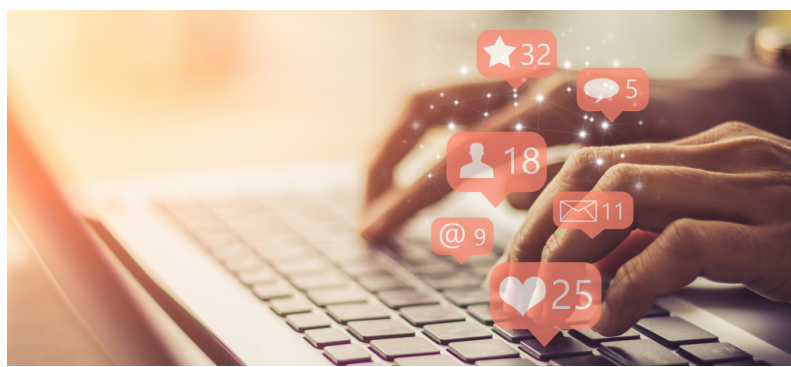
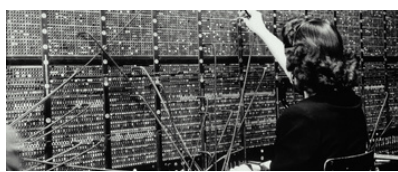
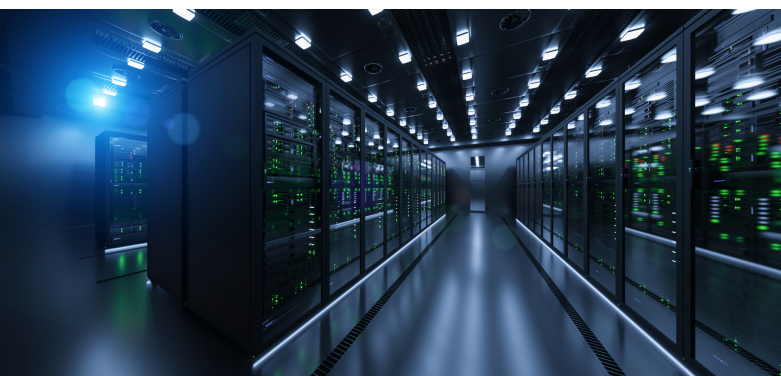
Jobs of the Future

Jobs can go “extinct” as societal needs change. For example:

- **Lamplighters:** In the days before electric lighting, lamplighters were responsible for lighting and maintaining gas street lamps. With the widespread adoption of electric lighting, this job is no longer necessary.
- **Ice cutters:** Before the invention of refrigeration, ice was cut from frozen lakes and rivers in the winter and stored in ice houses to be used for cooling food and drinks in the summer. With the development of modern refrigeration technologies, the job of ice cutting is no longer necessary.
- **Switchboard operators:** Before the widespread use of the telephone, switchboard operators were responsible for manually connecting calls by inserting the appropriate wires into a switchboard. With the development of automated switchboards and other technologies, this job is no longer necessary.

Similarly, new jobs are created every day that did not previously exist.

- **Social media manager:** With the rise of social media platforms, many businesses and organizations now have a need for someone to manage their online presence and to engage with their audience on social media. This job did not exist until the development of social media platforms.
- **Data scientist:** As more and more data has become available, the need for people with specialized skills to analyze and interpret that data has grown. Data scientists are responsible for working with large datasets to uncover insights and to inform decision-making. This job did not exist until the availability of large amounts of data.
- **Drone operator:** The use of drones has become increasingly common in recent years, and as a result, there is now a need for people with specialized skills to operate these drones. Drone operators are responsible for flying drones and using them for a variety of purposes such as aerial photography, surveying, and package delivery. This job did not exist until the development of drone technology.



When planning your career, it can be helpful to think about how the working world might change in the future. While the world will most likely always need people to be teachers, social workers, and artists, the development of new technologies can create jobs and careers that did not previously exist. It is difficult to predict with certainty which jobs/careers will be popular in the next 30 years, as this will depend on a variety of factors including technological developments, economic conditions, and societal needs. However, you can begin to think of transferrable skills and virtues you could develop that might be needed in the future. Below are 30 such career areas. Notice how some of these are more strictly technology-focused (e.g., robotics engineers) while others involve using emerging technologies to help creative people reach more people (e.g., social media managers).

- **Artificial intelligence engineer:** technical knowledge, empathy, problem-solving, critical thinking
- **Virtual reality developer:** technical knowledge, adaptability, problem-solving, creativity
- **Robotics engineer:** technical knowledge, adaptability, problem-solving, determination
- **Renewable energy developer:** technical knowledge, adaptability, problem-solving, critical thinking

- **Data scientist:** analytical thinking, technical knowledge, curiosity
- **Genetic counsellor:** knowledge, empathy, discernment, adaptability
- **Digital Fashion Designer:** creativity, technical knowledge, problem-solving
- **Holographic Artist:** creativity, attention to detail, technical knowledge, adaptability
- **Cybersecurity expert:** technical knowledge, adaptability, problem-solving, vigilance
- **Social media manager:** creativity, adaptability, persuasion, communication
- **E-commerce specialist:** technical knowledge, adaptability, problem-solving, organization
- **Sustainability consultant:** knowledge, adaptability, problem-solving, critical thinking
- **Online education facilitator:** adaptability, empathy, organization, knowledge
- **Augmented reality designer:** technical knowledge, adaptability, problem-solving, creativity
- **Blockchain developer:** technical knowledge, adaptability, problem-solving, critical thinking
- **Drones operator:** technical knowledge, adaptability, problem-solving, precision
- **Internet of Things specialist:** technical knowledge, adaptability, problem-solving, critical thinking
- **Nanotechnology engineer:** technical knowledge, adaptability, problem-solving, precision
- **Biomedical engineer:** knowledge, precision, problem-solving, critical thinking
- **Environmental scientist:** curiosity, critical thinking, precision, diligence
- **Medical researcher:** curiosity, critical thinking, precision, diligence
- **Climate change specialist:** knowledge, adaptability, problem-solving, critical thinking
- **Green building designer:** creativity, adaptability, precision, technical knowledge
- **Public health educator:** knowledge, adaptability, empathy, communication
- **Environmental health specialist:** knowledge, adaptability, problem-solving, critical thinking
- **Personal health coach:** knowledge, adaptability, empathy, communication
- **Virtual event coordinator:** adaptability, organization, creativity, communication
- **Mobile app developer:** technical knowledge, adaptability, problem-solving, creativity
- **Health information technologist:** technical knowledge, adaptability, attention to detail, organization
- **Satellite design engineer:** technical knowledge, adaptability, problem-solving, precision



Planning ahead

In this section of the workbook, we will help you to envision your future self and create a roadmap for personal and professional growth. We will start by considering what your ideal working week might look like in ten years' time, taking into account all aspects of your life. This will give you a better understanding of how to achieve the work-life balance that is important to you. Next, you will complete an exercise to help you select a career that will allow you to flourish, both personally and professionally. By aligning your character strengths and aspirations with your career goals, you will be able to make informed decisions about your future, one step at a time. But, of course, life happens and there are lots of things that can unexpectedly alter your plans. For this reason, we will also address the potential for life events to change your course and help you think ahead to how you can be resilient if and when this happens. By considering potential roadblocks and having a plan in place, we hope you will be better equipped to navigate any challenges that may arise. By the end of this section, we hope you will have a clear understanding of your future self, a plan for achieving your career and personal goals (big or small), and the resilience needed to stay on course, even in the face of life's challenges.



Your Ideal Working Week

At this point, you have considered your values and personality, thought ahead to how you might like to develop your character in the future, and learned about various careers and potential virtues needed for each. By now, you should have the tools to think holistically about what your ideal working week would look like in the future.

First, think about what your ideal working week would look like. What are the most important things you want to include in your schedule? Think of the trade-offs, opportunity costs, and advice from professionals outlined on pages 16-21!

Next, make a list of all the things you believe you will need to do during the week, including:

- work-related tasks (the more specific, the better),
- personal responsibilities (childcare, household chores, time with family and friends),
- activities for self-care (e.g., sleep, exercise, hobbies, reading, cooking, eating)
- personal development (e.g., volunteering, studying, or passion projects outside of work).

Then, look at your list and prioritize the items by how important they are to you. You may want to use a numbering system, with "1" being very important and "5" being not very important.

After you have prioritized your list, start to plan out your week by adding the items to your schedule. Be sure to include time for breaks and relaxation, as well as time for activities that support your personal development.

Finally, review your schedule and make any necessary adjustments. Be flexible and remember that it's okay to change your schedule as needed. The most important thing is to create a plan that works for you and helps you achieve a healthy work-life balance – this looks different for everyone.

PAUSE FOR THOUGHT...

It could be good to speak to a teacher or someone working in the particular career area you are interested in to understand whether *they* think your schedule is realistic, and whether there are other things to factor into your timetable.

We have created a template for a weekly schedule that you can use for this exercise. You can download it here (Appendix 2):

<https://osf.io/gb8qn/>



Me in Ten Years

1. Take out a sheet of paper and a pen or pencil.
2. Write down your current age at the top of the page.
3. Now, imagine that it is ten years from now. Write down what you would ideally like your life to look like at this age in **as much detail** as you can.
4. Consider various aspects of your life, such as your career, relationships, hobbies, and personal growth. Remember how different you are now from how you were five years ago – you could change a lot more than you might think!
5. Write down **specific** goals and aspirations for each of these areas, as well as any other areas that are important to you.
6. For each goal or aspiration, think about what steps you will need to take, and which virtues you might develop that would help to achieve them. **Write these steps down** next to the goal.
7. After you have written down your goals and the steps you will need to take to achieve them, take some time to **reflect** on your list. Are your goals realistic and achievable? Do they align with your interests, personality, and the personal qualities you hope to develop in the future?
8. Once you are satisfied with your list, **share it** with a friend or family member and discuss it with them. This can help you to gain clarity and accountability in pursuing your goals.
9. You could also share your list with someone who is currently working in the career you want to pursue to get a sense of whether your plan is realistic and how it might need to be modified.
10. Finally, **set aside time** each week to work on your goals and track your progress. This will help you to stay motivated and focused.

Remember, achieving your goals is not always going to be easy. It is okay to take a break and return to a goal later. Every little step forwards is a positive and we are all a work in progress!



My age today is...	
Ten years from now, my ideal life would...	
My goals and aspirations will be...	
I will achieve and keep track of these goals by...	
My first/next step to achieve these goals will be...	

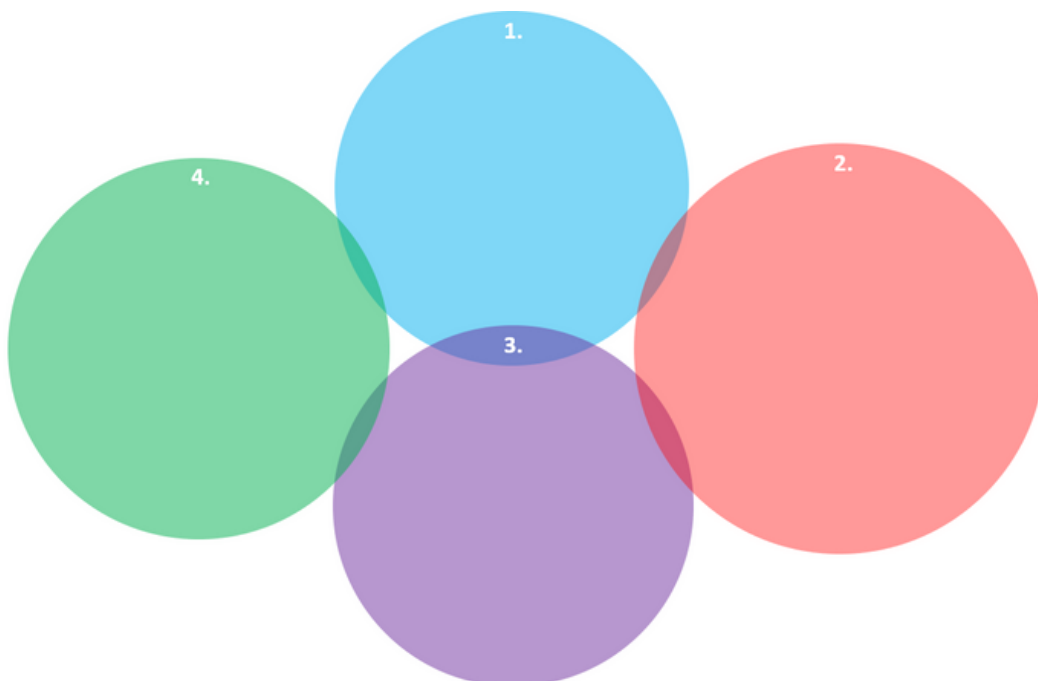
The Career Quartet

A quartet is a group of four people who sing or play music together. Each member typically has a specific role, such as a lead singer or instrumentalist, and the group works together to create harmonious music. In the same way, we believe there are four components that need to be present within a professional role so that the decision to pursue it is a wise one. These are:

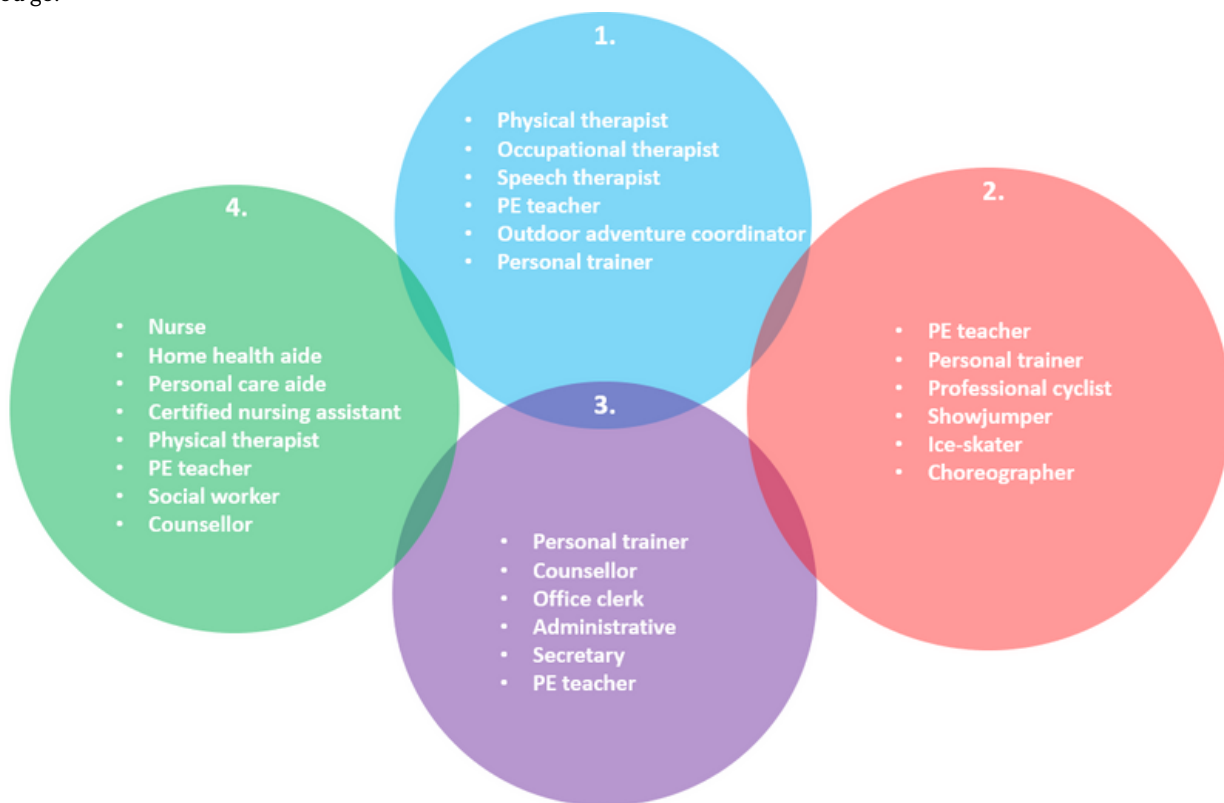
- A role suited to who I am and cannot or do not wish to change (“who I am”)
- A role that will help me to improve my character (“who I wish to become”)
- A role that will allow me to balance work with other aspects of my life that are important to me (“useful to me”)
- A role that allow me to contribute to a part of society that I care about (“useful for others”)



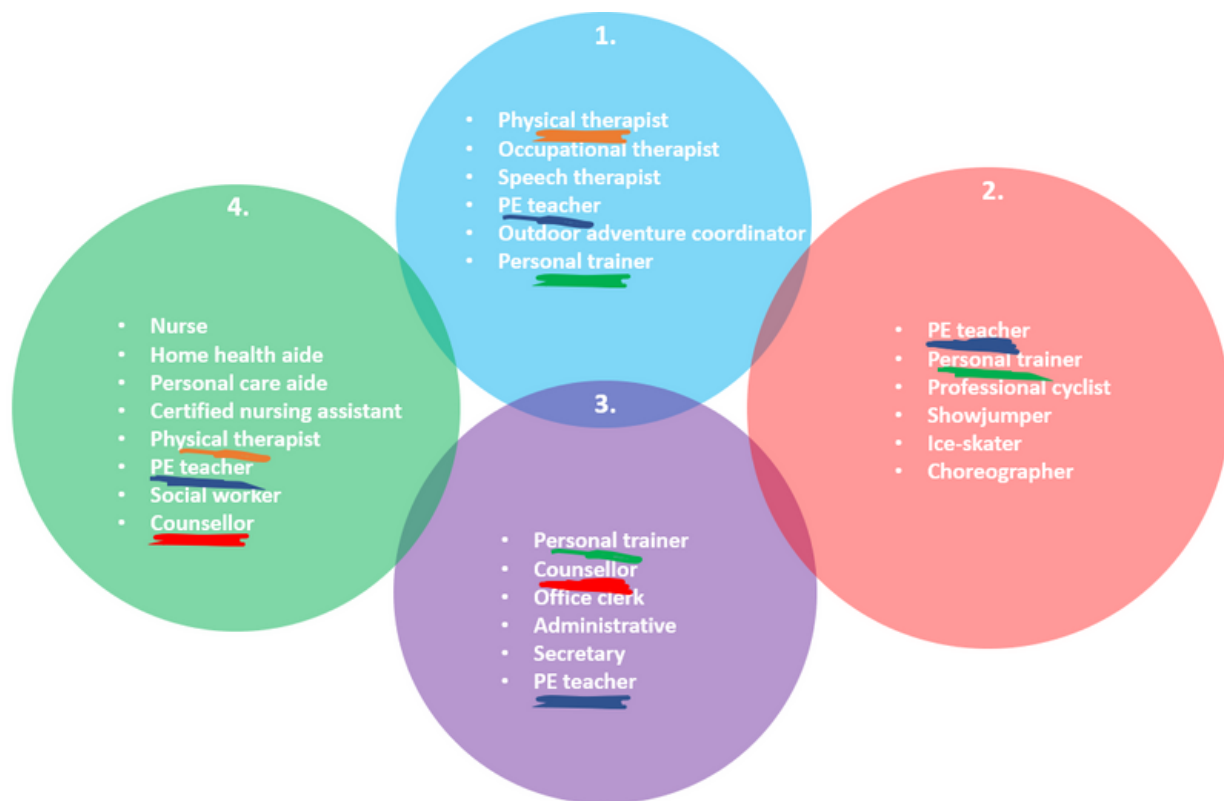
Let's take the Venn-diagram above apart:



Now, having done some initial research exploring the characteristics of potential jobs you might pursue, **populate each section** with jobs that you think might fit for you – the more the better, in the first instance. Don't be afraid to refine and revise this as you go.



Finally, take a look and see whether there are any **roles that fall into all four categories**: (i) They suit your personality and abilities - the things that are harder to change about yourself, (ii) they help you to improve your character and virtues to be more like the kind of person you wish to become, (iii) they allow you to balance your working life with other aspects of your life that are important to you, and (iv) they allow you to add value to an aspect of society that is important to you.



As we can see here, “PE teacher” fitted into every section in this example, and so this could be a great career choice for the person who completed this. Remember though that this is not an exact science, but rather a tool that may be useful to you in choosing a job that fits well with The Career Quartet.

Career Development Roadmap

You have now taken account of your personality, your values, how you hope to develop in the future, and identified some careers that you might flourish within. The next step is to think about practical steps you can take to get there.

Setting effective goals

SMART goals are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound goals. In simple terms, this means that your goals should be clear and specific, and should be accompanied by specific metrics that you can use to assess your progress. Your goals should also be realistic and attainable, and should be relevant to your overall career objectives. Finally, your goals should have a specific time frame attached to them, so that you have a deadline to work towards.

For example, a SMART goal might be to "improve my ability to handle rejection in sales by implementing a daily routine of self-reflection and positive affirmations for the next 90 days." This goal is specific (it focuses on improving one's ability to handle rejection in sales), measurable (it includes a specific routine to be implemented), attainable (it is realistic given the time frame and resources available), relevant (it aligns with the



overall objectives of the sales profession to handle rejection and maintain motivation), and time-bound (it has a specific deadline for completion within 90 days).

By setting SMART goals, you can create a clear plan for achieving your objectives and can track your progress along the way. This can help you stay motivated and on track, and can ultimately help you achieve your career goals. Remember though that your goals can change over time too, and that is okay. Working on our goals can be difficult, but it is important to have a go!

First, **consider the virtues you might develop** and how to set goals to help with this. Here is an example:

Virtue	Specific	Measurable	Attainable	Relevant	Time-Bound
Kindness	Yes (perform at least one act of kindness per day)	Yes (keep a journal to track daily acts of kindness)	Yes (identify opportunities for kindness in daily life)	Yes (aligns with overall personal values)	Yes (for the next 30 days)
Patience	Yes (practice patience in daily interactions and planning for the future)	Yes (keep a journal to track instances of patience)	Yes (identify triggers and develop strategies for managing impatience)	Yes (aligns with overall personal values and will help me to take smaller, more manageable career steps)	Yes (for the next 30 days)
Gratitude	Yes (express gratitude daily)	Yes (keep a journal to track instances of gratitude)	Yes (identify opportunities for gratitude in daily life)	Yes (aligns with overall personal values)	Yes (for the next 30 days)
Honesty	Yes (practice honesty in daily interactions)	Yes (keep a journal to track instances of honesty)	Yes (identify opportunities for honesty in daily life)	Yes (aligns with overall personal values and media career sought)	Yes (for the next 30 days)

Next, **set goals for obtaining any necessary qualifications**. Here is an example from someone who is currently in school who wishes to work within the media. They have taken the approach of gaining work experience alongside their qualifications, as this will build up their industry networks and progress at a pace that will allow them to manage competing responsibilities.

Qualification	Specific	Measurable	Attainable	Relevant	Time-Bound
T-level BTEC in Media, Broadcast, and Production	Yes (earn BTEC credits)	Yes (measure progress using grades and credits earned)	Yes (BTEC course is at introductory level)	Yes (helps me to pursue what I care about)	Yes (within 2 years)
Higher National Certificate (HNC) in Media Production	Yes (earn a HNC in Media Production)	Yes (measure progress using grades and credits earned)	Yes (builds on BTEC at level 4)	Yes (aligns with overall career goals)	Yes (within 4 years)
Foundation degree in Media Production	Yes (earn a Foundation degree in Media Production)	Yes (measure progress using grades and credits earned)	Yes (builds on level 4 with level 5 qualification)	Yes (aligns with overall career goals)	Yes (within 5 years)
Bachelor's degree in Film and Television Production	Yes (earn a Bachelor's degree in Film and Television Production)	Yes (measure progress using grades and credits earned)	Yes (progresses to level 6 from level 5 and builds on BTEC experience)	Yes (aligns with overall career goals)	Yes (within 8 years)
Master's degree in Media Management	Yes (earn a Master's degree in Media Management)	Yes (measure progress using grades and credits earned)	Yes (progresses to level 7 after several years of real-world experience)	Yes (if I want to progress to management later on)	Yes (within 12 years)

Finally **consider experience you might need to gain**. Following on from the example above, here is one approach:

Work Experience	Specific	Measurable	Attainable	Relevant	Time-Bound
T-level BTEC placement	Yes (placement experience from educational experience)	Yes (measure progress using feedback from mentors and supervisors)	Yes (included as part of qualification)	Yes (aligns with overall career goals)	Yes (within 2 years)
Production Assistant	Yes (work as a production assistant alongside HNC)	Yes (measure progress using feedback received)	Yes (identify opportunities through BTEC and HNC placement contacts)	Yes (provides media industry experience)	Yes (part-time alongside HNC)
Volunteer work for media-related events	Yes (volunteer at media-related events)	Yes (measure progress by skills acquired and feedback received)	Yes (identify through industry networks)	Yes (provides media industry experience)	Yes (alongside Foundation degree)
Participate in student media societies	Yes (join or set up a student media society)	Yes (measure progress by whether I have become a member)	Yes (will be possible once accepted to Bachelor's degree)	Yes (demonstrates motivation, autonomy, and leadership)	Yes (alongside Bachelor's degree)

Remember, when making career plans, or plans for other aspects of your life that go alongside your career, it can be of great benefit to **check your plans with someone working in that career area**. They are most likely to know what day-to-day life is like working in that profession, including where the hidden rewards and drawbacks are, and which character qualities are necessary to flourish over time. It can also be helpful to go through this with a teacher at school, or a careers advisor. Finally, remember that jobs/careers shape and are shaped your identity. You will change over time and so you are not beholden to a career choice you made some years ago when you were a different person.



Major Life Events and Bumps in the Road

After completing the exercises in this workbook, you might know a little bit more about the role you want to play in society and where you see yourself in the future. You might have been working hard to get good grades or have been accepted to your dream training course. You might be excited to study and graduate with a degree or apprenticeship that will help you land a great job.

But then, something unexpected happens. Maybe it's a family emergency, a health problem, or some other life event that forces you to put your plans on hold. Suddenly, your carefully laid career plans are thrown into disarray. It can be frustrating and overwhelming to have your career plans disrupted by life events. But instead of getting discouraged, it's important to flexibly adjust your goals and figure out how to overcome the challenges you're facing.

One way to do this is to be honest with yourself and others about what you're going through. It's okay to struggle from time to time, and to ask for help if you need it. Another important thing to remember is to have compassion for yourself and others who may be struggling. Remember that everyone goes through tough times at some stage. Practicing compassion for yourself and others can help you to avoid getting overwhelmed by unrealistic expectations you might be tempted to put on yourself. Finally, and perhaps the most difficult of all to prepare for, it is important to be prepared to persevere with your goals, even when things get tough. By staying focused, you can keep moving forward, even when your career plans are altered by unforeseen events.

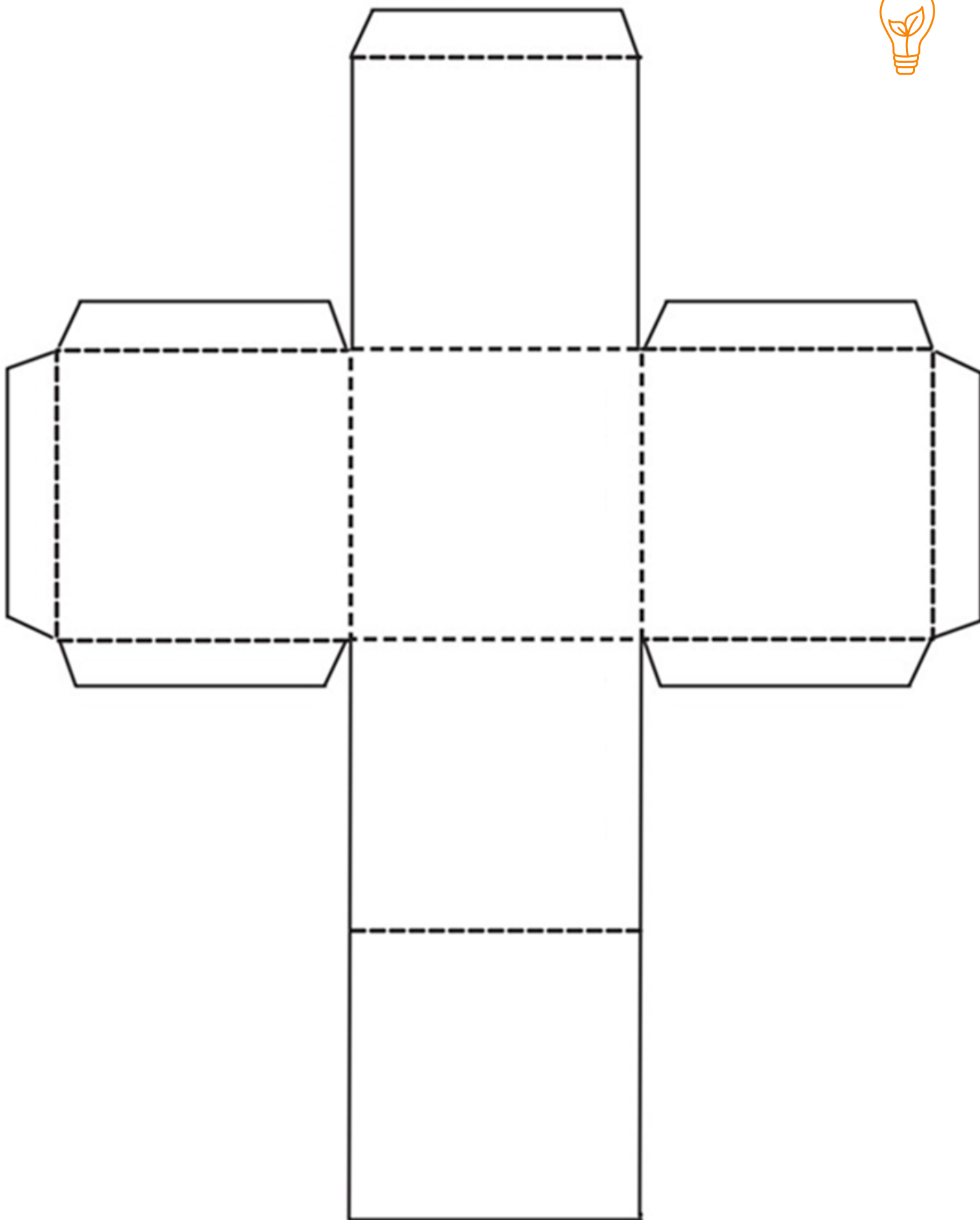
While perseverance is important at various stages, do remember that it is also important to be open to changing your goals as your life unfolds and your priorities shift. Being open to re-evaluating your goals on a regular basis shows that you acknowledge that your future self is likely to be wiser than your present self. It is not necessarily a sign of failure to shift focus if you find that your goal is no longer in line with the person and the professional you wish to become, or with your circumstances.

Here is a list of life events, some unexpected, and some that might have been planned, that *could* change people's career plans. You may have already experienced some of these:

- Being a victim of crime
- Going through a divorce
- Moving to a new city or country
- Starting a new job
- Getting fired from a job
- Becoming sick or injured
- Going back to school
- Losing a loved one
- Experiencing financial difficulties
- Developing a serious health condition or disability
- Caring for a sick family member
- Experiencing a natural disaster
- Facing legal troubles
- Going through a period of personal growth or self-discovery
- Dealing with a mental health issue
- Becoming a carer for a family member
- Going through a breakup
- Experiencing discrimination or harassment at work
- Struggling with substance abuse
- Losing a home to foreclosure or eviction
- Facing an unexpected pregnancy
- Experiencing a major change in personal relationships.

On the next page, you will find a template for a six-sided die that you can cut out and put together. On each side, write an *unexpected* life event. You could draw on ones from the list above or write your own. Once you have done this, cut out the die along the solid lines, and fold it into a cube along the dashed lines. Then, roll it and see which unexpected life event you get.

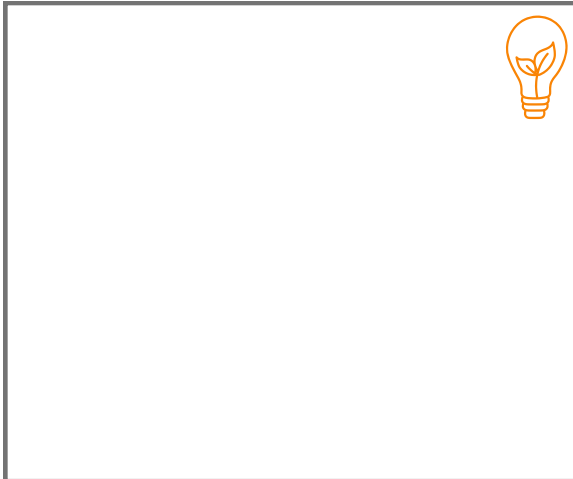
Once you have done this, write out a practical plan (perhaps using SMART goals as on the previous two pages) for how you might adapt your career plans should this unexpected event happen.





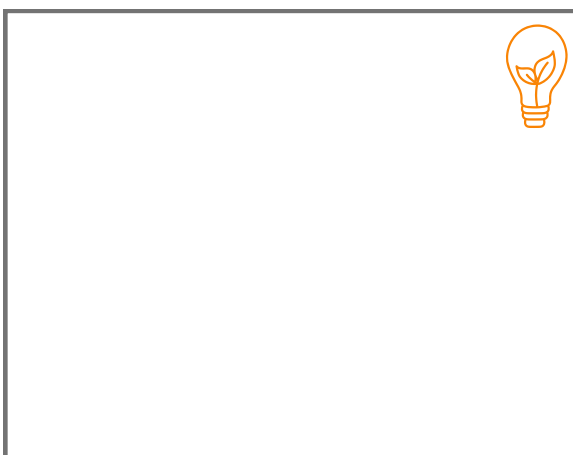
Approaching Retirement

Thinking about your whole life and what you want it to be can feel like a lot of pressure, which can provoke feelings of self-doubt, anxiety, or you might put pressure on yourself for one particular goal to work out. This is normal, don't worry. Take a moment to reflect on any doubts or anxieties you might have about the job/career path you have set forth in front of you. Write them in the box below:



Next, take a moment to imagine that you are now having a conversation with a version of yourself who is **at the other end of their career**; instead of starting out their job/career, they are approaching retirement. They are not just older, but also wiser. Their life more or less looks like you hoped yours would. They have developed their character and virtues to be the best version of you. They are flourishing subjectively, with a good level of wellbeing, meaning, and purpose. They are flourishing objectively, with strong relationships they can draw on, people they love and can trust, no major money worries, and good physical health.

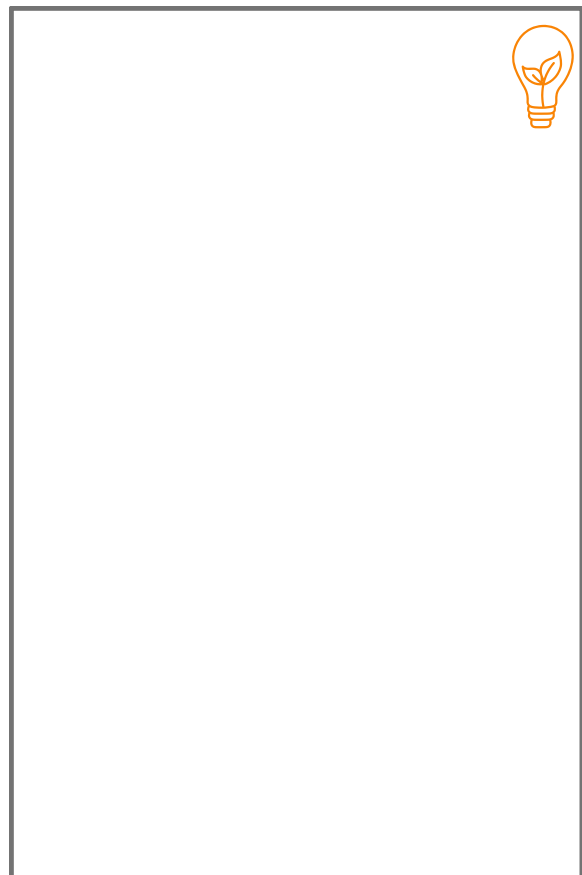
This version of yourself approaching retirement can see you here today thinking on these various anxieties about choosing a career that fits in with a life you want to live. They might see a person struggling with anxiety and fear, but they know first-hand that you are also capable of growth and change. As they take a step back and observe your today (and their past), they may be able to gain a new perspective on your worries and fears about the job or career you want to pursue and find new ways of dealing with them. As they sit across from you, **what do they feel towards the version of yourself here today?**



As you continue to reflect on your current doubts from a new perspective, **what are some things that you might ask your future self** about this career/job decision? For example, you might want to understand their perspective on what is important to prioritise in life, or where they wish they had spend less of their time. Remember, though, that we all make good decisions in hindsight but we will not always get it right in the moment. Be kind towards yourself and do not put yourself under undue pressure.



Finally, seek counsel from the wiser version of yourself approaching retirement. They can see your doubts, but know your potential. If you were to have an honest and self-compassionate conversation with that version of yourself, try to imagine how that conversation might go from both perspectives. **What encouragement might they give you** to help you make a job or career choice that will nurture the kind of person you hope to become?



Take a moment to read their words of encouragement again and allow these words to sink in. Let them provide you with comfort and inspiration as you continue to face the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead as you develop as a professional, and as a whole person.

Afterword

In my 30+ years of experience in the careers advice world I have been very aware that to be able to make career choices, at all ages individuals need to find out about themselves, their likes and dislikes, and their skills, interests, and aspirations. Learning from the experience of others is also important to help with making career decisions. I feel this workbook helps with both learning about yourself and learning from others. Some of the comments about this workbook from my careers advice team can be found on the right hand side of this page.

**Regional Director,
National Careers Service,
West Midlands**

For further information and guidance on careers in the UK, there are a range of excellent resources available from the National Careers Service here:



<https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/>

Alternatively, you can speak to a professional careers adviser by calling:
0800 100 900

I love how all of the tools are in one place and in a logical format so I definitely feel it has great value and benefit. I would have loved to have done something like this before choosing option at school, and then mid way through college. This could also be useful as part of a workplace appraisal, or used for staff who have been in a work place for over 5 years as a way of making sure they don't cruise but are reinvigorated at 5, 10, 15, 20 years. It might also help those who are coming to the end of their working life to make the transition into retirement. I think it has many uses for different groups.”
JL, Careers Advisor

“This workbook will enable learners to develop awareness of pitfalls and obstacles to come, knowing it’s okay to make wrong career choices, and also will help with understanding that alternative career pathways are possible.”
RG, Lead Careers Advisor

“This workbook can be of great value to individuals in planning their career as it puts together the experience and expertise of many. The activities included are very useful to help to help both young people and adults to consider what they really want from their lives and careers and to look at career planning in different ways. I like that it would be useful to both individuals and for group activities.”
PS, Careers Guidance Workforce Trainer

Thank you!

Thank you for taking the time to work through this workbook. We hope that you have found this workbook to be a valuable tool in your journey to making informed career decisions. Our aim was to provide you with a comprehensive guide to help you understand your personality, character strengths, and aspirations, and align them with your career goals.

We would love to hear from you!

We would love to hear about your experience with this workbook and whether it has helped you on your journey. If you have any positive feedback or suggestions for how we might improve this workbook, please feel free to share them with us by scanning this QR code.

Your feedback is important to us and helps us to continue to improve our resources and support those seeking to make informed career decisions.



<https://tinyurl.com/careersworkbook>

We wish you all the very best in your career journey and hope that this workbook has been a valuable resource for you.





This project, and its associated outputs, were generously supported by funding from the Society for Educational Studies.



1st Edition

First Published: May 2023

ISBN: 9780704429833

<https://www.doi.org/10.48352/bybl0001>

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