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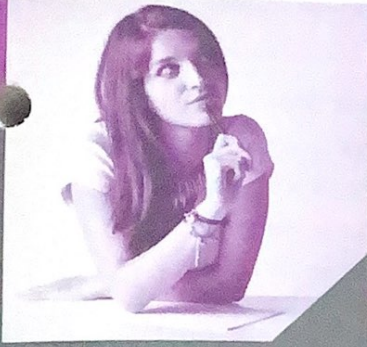
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chapter

1

Know Yourself

A SELF-AWARENESS JOURNEY

Learning Objectives

1. To understand how writing can assist you in the self-discovery process
2. To assess what you enjoy by exploring your interests and passions
3. To gain knowledge about your skills, including transferable and life skills
4. To assess the importance of values and lifestyle preferences in decision making
5. To explore how personality and "fit" can make a difference in your work

*Life is either a daring adventure
or it is nothing.*

—HELEN KELLER

PROFILE



Introducing Alberto. Meet Alberto, a 20-year-old college sophomore who is making relevant decisions about his future. Like many students, he feels overwhelmed by choosing a career. Alberto is undecided about his major. He is interested in business, art, psychology, and sociology but is also considering a technical career. His adviser has encouraged him to declare a major, but he is reluctant to do so given his diverse interests. His parents are encouraging him to consider a business degree so that he can contribute to the family income.

ALBERTO'S STUDENT PROFILE:

- Alberto is starting to get involved in on-campus activities. He holds a leadership position on campus. Alberto joined a business club through the school, and he volunteers for a city arts program associated with the college.

One of the first tasks Alberto wants to address is self-awareness. He has multiple interests but is unclear about how these interests might translate into a major or career. He explains to his adviser, "I just don't know where to start."

Before moving into the rest of the chapter, consider the following questions about your situation now that you've met Alberto.

- Are you undecided about your career direction? If so, what steps might you take to help you with the career decision-making process? If you are in a major or career program, are you sure it's the best choice?
- What are some of the barriers you are facing at this time in your life? What is your biggest obstacle?
- What is the most important decision you hope to make in the next 6 to 12 months?

It took me almost three years to decide on a major. I was worried about making the "wrong" decision. Eventually, I decided on a psychology major after consulting with my academic adviser and exploring various resources. (Actually, she told me I had to make a decision now.) I encourage students to do extensive research prior to making this important decision.

—MICHAEL STEBLETON, CO-AUTHOR

There are no easy answers to these questions; however, this textbook will help with the career decision-making process.

Like Alberto, you must be an active participant in this process of career-life decision making. Ultimately, you are responsible for the direction your life takes. This is your opportunity to get to know you: your interests and passions, your unique skills, and how you want to live your life! Or you may have a selected a career program that you intend to pursue. Or perhaps you are at the end of your educational training. This section can help confirm your decision and lead you to the next steps. This

process of career-life planning is NOT a one-time event; it's ongoing. Even if you plan to stay in your selected occupation for a long time, there is a good chance you will hold multiple jobs within that career. For this reason, it is important that you understand yourself. Some of the exercises may seem redundant or too fundamental, but we encourage you to complete the exercises. Again, the main goal is to confirm your career-life decisions.

How do you get to know yourself? Disconnect the phone, turn off the TV, and tell everyone to stay away for a short while. Find a quiet, peaceful place. Then, take a pen and paper and start working through the exercises in this chapter. Begin today to plan for your future.

Methods for Self-Analysis

The primary method used in this chapter for achieving self-awareness is writing. Desires, ideas, and concepts shift, disappear, and change in thought form. The act of writing puts these thoughts into a form that can be analyzed and reviewed over the years. Furthermore, writing serves as a useful reminder or confirmation of a decision you made in your life. In times of doubt, you can go back to what you were experiencing at that time and be reminded of why you made the choice you did.

You will be using the following methods to capture your reflections:

- Creating thought clusters (this approach is similar to brainstorming)
- Writing spontaneously
- Making intuitive lists of items
- Completing sentences spontaneously

Other writing strategies that you might add to the preceding list include:

- Keeping a journal of your insights
- Creating a scrapbook of writings, pictures, quotes, and other items that inspire you
- Visualizing yourself leading the career-life that you really desire and putting those images down on paper
- Completing several self-assessment inventories—including interest and personality surveys (discussed later in the chapter)



The primary methods for self-analysis used in this chapter will be reflection and writing.

Source: Shutterstock

Clustering: A Thought Picture

Because many of us have difficulty expressing ourselves articulately in writing, the clustering method has been selected to assist you with this task. You will find this technique called for throughout the text, not only to help you write but also to help you analyze a job advertisement and use other job-hunting strategies.

Clustering is similar to brainstorming in that you never rule out ideas when they come to you. No matter how crazy the idea may seem, you record it. Because clustering may be new to you, here are the general principles of clustering as described by Gabriele Lusser Rico in her book *Writing the Natural Way* (2000).