

Champion Your Career: *Winning in the World of Work*

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my mother, Rosalind Mona Bellows, my best friend and greatest supporter, who was a true diva, who charmed and inspired everyone she knew especially me. Her words of wisdom have never been forgotten and have influenced me on the many paths I have taken in my life. Her favorite words to me were, "If there is a will,

there is a way. If you want to, you can do it, and there is no such word as can't." That's how this book came to be.

Thanks Mom

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

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This book would not have come to be had it not been for Dr. Pat Bacilli, whose idea it was and who gave me the rights to the radio script, to turn my 10 week radio show into a book and a deck of cards. The deck of cards came first, now the book. Thanks Dr. Pat.

Many thanks also go to my family, friends and colleagues, who each read chapters and gave me their comments as well as encouragement to keep going. A big thank you to my first editor Linda Hurst who started the process of turning the radio scripts into prose. And finally, thank you, thank you, thank you ad infinitum to my developmental editor Julie Fretzin. Without her help, unwavering patience (with me) and the writing process, as well as her stellar writing and editing skills, this book would not have happened. Again, Thank you everyone who played a part in the creation of this book.

To my readers I wish you success in finding work that is right for you and in championing your career. I know you can be a winner in the world of work.

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CHAPTER 1

FOCUS ON YOUR FUTURE

I remember standing in the cafeteria line at school when I was nine years old when, occasionally, other children would come up and talk to me and tell me their stories. I didn't ask them to; I was just standing there, waiting in line for my food. They would start telling me everything about themselves or what their problems were, and I would respond with something like, "Wow, I can hear you've had a really hard time," or, "I hear that you're in a lot of pain," or something like that. And then they would talk some more.

I think I just had this gift, a natural ability that drew others to come and talk to me and to tell me their problems. Somehow they knew I would listen and that I would be non-judgmental. This natural ability followed me the rest of my life in the careers that I have chosen—as an educator, career counselor, and coach. I have always wanted to listen to and be of service to others. People have always fascinated me and the world of work fascinates me as well. By marrying the two as a career counselor/coach, I bring together my innate abilities and passions and the skills that have naturally flowed from me since I was a child.

This experience has given me the special joy that comes from championing the causes of other people and providing support that can help them discover new aspects of themselves, while watching them expand and develop. Life is full of obstacles and there are times when we all need someone to champion us; to be in our corner to cheer us on and guide us in finding effective solutions to our problems. Sometimes, however, we have to do that ourselves.

Become Your Own Career Champion

This book is designed to help you understand that you have the power to be your own champion. You can create your own positive perspective with the messages you play in your inner dialogue and then manifest those messages in the material world. You can do this for yourself. Do not allow other people to tell you, "Don't do this" or "You shouldn't do that" or "This is not good enough." Instead, you can say, "I know what works for me. I can make my own life and I can champion my career. I can make it happen for myself. I can be successful at whatever vocation I choose."

As you move through this process you will see that when you show up to work, you get to decide how your situation is going to be. There are no victims in the career development ladder unless you choose to be one. The inner voice that says, "I have to get a job," gradually shifts to be more about, "I want to do something that feels good to me, something that serves me. I want to be in an environment that's nurturing and productive."

Career Development Theory

The theory of career development has not changed over the many years I have been doing this work. To answer the question “What career is right for you?” there are three important answers to seek out:

1. What are your interests? What do you love to do?
2. What are your values—professional as well as personal?
3. What are your skills and talents?

All of the career tests, assessments and services are designed to determine this fundamental information.

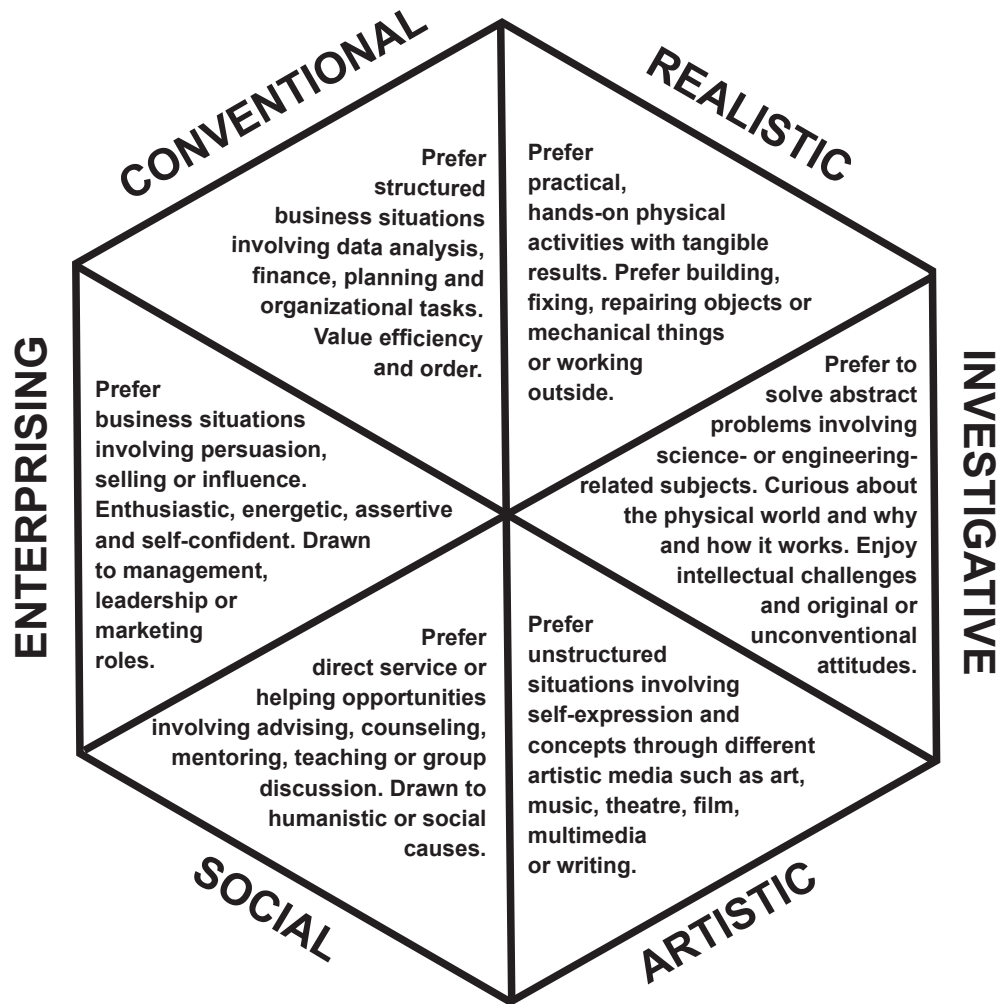
Defining Your Interests

One way to develop a strategy for finding work that meets your fundamental goals is to take a very close look at where your interests lie. To help define them, you can try this assessment developed by Richard Bowles, the author of the popular *What Color Is Your Parachute?* It’s based on the Holland Code, which was created by John Holland and is the basis for such governmental resources as the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles* and the *Occupational Outlook Handbook*.

The Holland Code describes a process by which all people and all jobs can be divided into six distinct categories. The model is drawn as a hexagon with the categories placed in a specific order. Beginning with the top and continuing in a clockwise pattern, the six categories are:

1. **Realistic:** Athletes and mechanical people who prefer to work with objects, plants or animals, or like to be outdoors.
2. **Investigative:** Scientists, people who like to observe, analyze and solve problems.
3. **Artistic:** Artists and musicians, innovative, creative and those who like unstructured environments.
4. **Social:** People who work with people; teachers, guides, counselors. They care and they are very good with words.
5. **Enterprising:** Managers, influencers, persuaders, lawyers.
6. **Conventional:** People who like to work with data in a systematic way. They are numerical, have clerical ability, and pay attention to detail.

HOLLAND CODE MODEL



This exercise allows us to understand our work preferences based on the six categories. The exercise begins as you imagine that you are at a party where people from these six categories are grouped together around the room. Notice which group you are drawn to join first. Imagine spending time with these people and see how that feels. Now see which group you would be drawn to next and imagine spending time with them. Repeat one more time so that you have chosen the three groups you were most attracted to.

Now you have a three-letter code based on the first letter of each group (in the order you chose them). Your code might be R-I-A, A-S-C, I-E-C, or any of the other possibilities. We seek people like us. If you are an entrepreneurial type, you are probably going to want to spend more of your time in that kind of environment and with those kinds of people. Careers work the same

way. So once you determine your code, you can research the industries, jobs, companies and people that are associated with your code and with each category. This book will show you how to do this research.

Obviously, this is a very simplified version of the assessment process but it is definitely a way to get started. This is a self-directed assessment and there are no right or wrong answers. Keep in mind, however, that the categories that are right next to each other in the hexagon are most compatible. It is going to be easier and more straightforward to find a career that marries two or all three of them. With two types on the opposite ends of the hexagon, such as a C and an A, you are going to have a harder time finding work that is satisfying to you. Maybe you will find work that satisfies one category and decide to develop the other interest outside of work time.

No job is going to give you 100 percent of what you want, but my advice is to aim for at least 70 percent job satisfaction. The latter is a really good figure and you could be quite happy with that level of career-related fulfillment. When the figure starts to go down to 50 percent job satisfaction, it means that half the time something is not right, something is out of place. Remember this is half of your workday. You then must start looking honestly at your situation and determine if you are “stuck” in the job.

Some people might make the decision to accept a 50 percent satisfaction level from their work life, because perhaps they happily leave their job at the office and then come home and pursue a hobby like playing music. You need to look at your own workday to determine if you are able to make a 50 percent job satisfaction work for you, or if you feel you are stuck in a dead-end situation.

As you know, you have two sides of your life: your work life and your personal life. What you should aim for is to blend the two together to come up with a TOTAL satisfaction level. If your work life and your personal life do not add up to a high enough level of satisfaction, then you might be ready to look at a career change. Either way, this book will help you determine what your basic needs are for happiness in the workplace, as well as your personal life. Then it will help you move on to a higher level of overall satisfaction in your life.

A Note for College Students

In the past, it was normal for students to declare a major related to a career, complete a prescribed set of studies, find a job in a related field, and stay in that field until they retired. One decision and that was it! Today, however, it is far more common for students to change their majors and do several career searches and changes in their work lifetime.

People change their careers for a variety of reasons. Perhaps they made an unwise choice initially or the career they selected no longer exists. Often they want to match their changing values and needs to a new set of career possibilities.

Making the right plans for your future during these changing times can be difficult. The self-assessment tools provided in this book can give you more choices, broaden your options, and give you the confidence that you are on the right career path.

A self-assessment can reveal your characteristics, interests, values and skills. It will define your strengths and your weaknesses. Looking for a match between these and the work you are considering is the most important step you can take before you write a résumé or begin your job search. In fact, when the time comes to write your résumé and prepare for a job interview, you will find the task easier if you have completed the self-assessment process first!

Recognizing the Need for Change

If you are already working, there are three main reasons why a career change might be right for you. First, it could be that you have the right job with the wrong company. For example, you may love the work you do as an administrative assistant, but you may not like the philosophy of the company, or you may find that you cannot stand behind their mission. Their values are not a match for yours. If the environment, including the people, is not a good fit for you, even the right work you do will feel like you're in the wrong job.

The second reason could be that you have the wrong position in the right company. In this case, you should look at your passions, interests and skills and find a way to put them to use in your own position or in another job within the same company. For some people, it might be about finding time outside of work to make use of those skills.

The third reason that career change might be right for you is that job security is an illusion. You might love your job and your company, but the company could move, reorganize, or go out of business due to various unforeseeable circumstances. This is why determining your skills and talents is such an important strategy in career development—no matter where you go, you take those skills and talents with you.

In this book, we'll delve into identifying your interests, values and skills, and then provide you with the concrete tools to choose, develop and change your career, no matter what stage of life you are currently in. These will include networking, goal-setting, researching, and decision-making. Sections are dedicated to writing résumés, cover letters and follow-up letters, as well as appropriate dress attire and other interview strategies.

Students will find specific guidance for launching a new career after college. Retirees will learn how to retire with fire by enlivening their retirement years with work they are passionate about. So get ready to champion your career!

CHAPTER 2

CHANGE CAREERS WITH COURAGE

Any kind of change takes courage. People want to stay where they are comfortable. However, in order for you to be truly satisfied throughout your work life, your career needs to change and grow with you.

Your Holland Code—the three job categories you are most attracted to—may change throughout your life. In fact, they most likely *will* change. Statistics show that people change careers up to three times throughout their lives—and some people pursue as many as seven careers. We are different people at age 20 than we are at age 30, 40, 50 or 60. We look at life differently and our values change too.

That is why identifying your values is such a key part of career development. This process involves asking and answering questions of yourself about what is important to you, and observing what you feel passionately attracted to (as well as what you feel passionately *repelled* by).

10 Reasons for Pursuing Your Ideal Career

I have a short list of the top 10 reasons why you need to work at having your dream job. These reasons will be reaffirmed throughout this book as you read on.

Reason #1: If you are doing what you love to do, it allows you to be your true self all of the time. Think about it. It really takes a tremendous amount of energy on a daily basis to not be authentic at work. Sometimes we feel we have to take on a sort of “false persona” to fulfill the job requirements. Your ideal job will enable you to be who you are and not waste any energy.

Reason #2: Your dream job fits into your life by integrating perfectly into your lifestyle. Your ideal career will feel like a natural part of who you are and it will not necessarily interfere with other aspects of your life. Of course, some days may be more stressful and chaotic than others, but basically you can still find the balance to have a fulfilling life.

Reason #3: Your ideal career reflects and incorporates your values. Your values reflect what is truly important to you and your dream career will align with the values that resonate with you. For example, if you are concerned about the environment, your dream job is not going to ask you to be involved with toxic waste dumping. It is as simple as that: Living your values. You are going to love your work and it is going to give you what you want in order to feel alive and productive.

Reason #4: Your dream job will allow you to tap into your unique talents. Your skills and strengths are gifts that come naturally to you. If you are in your ideal career, it will feel like a

perfect fit. It will allow you to express yourself fully and you will notice that your work will feel effortless.

Reason #5: Your work will give you energy instead of draining you. If you're not doing work that's right for you, you will probably feel drained and tired when you come home. But if you're doing what you love, you will feel energized by it instead of exhausted by it. You'll look forward to it. You will embrace it every day. And if you receive energy from your work, this will energize other areas of your life as well.

Reason #6: Your dream career will enable you to align yourself with your passions and to do what you love. This is a core component of the right livelihood. When you're passionate about what you do, your purpose is fulfilled and you will feel very satisfied and comfortable. Then you become a more generous, caring human being.

Reason #7: Your dream job helps you to make a difference in something you believe in. Generally, when you do what you love, you believe in it. You want to do more of it. You feel you are making a difference and you feel happy about doing this work. Sometimes you'll think about your work and it will bring about change in your life or help to clarify something else that's important to you.

Reason #8: Of course your ideal career is enjoyable and it does not seem like work. Very frequently, if you love what you do, you're going to wake up in the morning and say, "Do I really get paid for doing this?" Your dream job can feel more like a hobby than a job!

Reason #9: A dream job follows your wants instead of your "shoulds." You're listening to your intuition and to your heart instead of solely to your rational mind. When you listen to what your intuition says, then you will find that the rest of your life will start to rearrange itself so that you can truly be who you are and enjoy a truly meaningful life.

Reason #10: Your dream job fulfills you. It gives a sense of completion. You will have a positive impact on others and your community because you are serving your own life's purpose.

Fantasy Workday

Here's an exercise to help you consider your most compelling dreams. Close your eyes and try to imagine the ideal workday for yourself. Don't be concerned with the realities—just let your imagination go. See if you can picture, in full detail, what you would be doing. Then open your eyes and answer the following questions.

When done, go back over your answers and put an "I" for those you feel are indispensable, an "O" for those that are desirable but optional, and an "F" for those which are basically a frill.

- You wake up—at what time?
- You get dressed—describe your clothes.

- What kind of preparations do you have to make?
- Do you have to work or do you work because you want to?
- How do you get there? How far is it?
- Do you do anything special on the way to work?
- You get to work. Where are you (city, small town, office park, home, etc.)?
- Describe the work setting.
- What kind of work do you do?
- What is the first task that you attend to as you start your day?
- What skills do you use and enjoy using today?
- What are the people like in your organization?
- How long have you worked there?
- What do you get paid?
- What are your benefits?
- What level is the job (professional, training, management, technical, apprenticeship)?
- Do you plan your work or does someone do it for you? How do you work (alone, in a group, contact with others)?
- Describe the people who work in your area.
- To whom do you report?
- Is it a quiet or busy setting? What is the pace like? Is it the same throughout the day or does it vary?
- Is the work predictable or are there changes as the day progresses?
- Is the work project- or process-oriented? What is satisfying about the work?
- How does the time flow? What is the course of the day like?
- What type of supervision are you receiving as you work?
- What do you do at lunchtime? How do you feel?
- What do you like about your job or occupation?
- What is the end of your day like? What happens next?
- Is there carryover between what happens at work and the rest of your life?
- How long do you see yourself remaining at this job?
- What is the next move (job step) for you?
- What are your highest aspirations in this field or place of employment?

Now consider the following questions based on the ideal workday that you have envisioned:

1. What do you notice about the overall flow of the day? How is it similar to or different from your current or recent work situation?
2. How does this work draw on your strengths and skills?
3. How does this work complement the rest of your life? Is it separated from or integrated into your life?
4. What does this exercise teach you about yourself? How can you use this information in your career planning?
5. What additional information do you need to gather based on this exercise?
6. What are the next steps for you now?

Four Stories about People Finding Their Ideal Careers

The following are stories of four different people sharing their successes and struggles to find and commit to their ideal career. They all went through their own unique process of finding their dream work but they all also went through the process of honestly assessing their personal values, interests, skills and talents.

Sara relates how she took small steps toward finding her ideal work situation:

“I had been working for our local arts council and not really happy with my job there. I decided to leave the job and look for work that reflected more of my values and that would utilize my skills and talents. It was important to me that I could really make some kind of impact or be of service in some way to the world. And at the same time, I wanted to have a job that I would feel passionate about. It was also important for me to work with people of good intention.

“So I’d been thinking about this for a long time. I looked at certain work and I thought, ‘No, I can’t do this, I can’t do that.’ I had little jobs here and there. For two years, I didn’t have a definite job. I was lucky to own my own home, so I was able to take out a loan. I maxed out my credit cards like a lot of people do but daily and constantly in my heart was this ‘Please bring me a job that will use my skills where I can be of benefit to humankind.’

“Eventually, through a friend, I met a man whose work I admired on another radio show. He had a public affairs program, talking about current issues of the day. I always liked his passion, his articulate conversation, his really good energy, so I was kind of a fan of his. One day this man and I were talking and I mentioned that one of my friends works for him. Then I said, ‘If ever you need help, please let me know. I’d be really interested to work with you.’ About two months later, he contacted me and said, ‘One of my employees has left. Are you interested in the job?’ Now I currently play world music on local public radio and have been doing so for thirteen years in Northern California.

“It didn’t happen overnight. It took two years for it to come to fruition, but through all that time I was networking and making contacts and following up on all opportunities that came my way. I wasn’t just sitting around waiting. At the same time, I was waiting.”

Mary has some struggles in identifying what is important to her apart from significant other aspects of her life. This is her story:

“I’m almost afraid to go for something that I love to do because maybe it would be called impractical and really I have an awful lot of negativity in my life from my upbringing with parents who were really tough on me. I didn’t have a lot of self-esteem and I still don’t and I think that interferes with giving myself permission to go forward. I just don’t know how to overcome that.”

Now Mary needs to have a strategy to deal with the “yeah, buts.” We in the coaching profession call these negative voices Gremlins. The key is to recognize the negative thoughts as your Gremlins because if you recognize them, you’re taking away some of their power. And these voices, these “yeah, buts,” want to keep us in homeostasis because it’s comfortable there. It’s a way of protecting ourselves from getting hurt or from the possibility of failing. But when you notice those voices you can say, “Thank you for noticing. Thank you for telling me this but, you know, I’m going to do it anyway.”

So keep listening to these “yeah, buts” and write down what they say to you. Make a list of your own personal “yeah, buts” and start listening to the number of times these “yeah, buts” come up when you start thinking about having your ideal career. Remember to say, “Thank you for your concern but, you know, I’m going to move ahead anyway.” Or try to take even a little step to move you towards- what you want. The Gremlin voice may not notice it or care that you’ve taken these tiny steps forward. Make one call a day about job opportunities instead of thinking you have to do 10 calls. Start slowly and try to be consistent.

As for finding work to pay the bills, sometimes you have to take a job that is not your ideal but that does not mean that you should stop moving toward the job that you want and taking those small steps toward it. The truth of the matter is that when you’re looking for work—guess what? It’s easier to find a better job when you already have a job. Just keep in mind what it is you really want to do. Again, take your small steps on a daily or weekly basis to achieve your goal and to keep moving forward.

Jenna has this to share about her career search process:

“Consistently writing down my career goals has been so important in my life. Even 10 years ago, when my husband and I got married, I told him, “Honey, I’m not going to work if we have kids.” And that was so firmly planted in my thoughts that what came to me about two years later was that I had the ability to be the manager of our property. So the apartment that we were