

The following article is the first in a series on finding a fulfilling career:

“The best way to change a life of frustration into a life of mastery is by developing talents and strengths not just shoring up weaknesses.” Edward M. Hallowell, M.D. and John J. Ratey, M.D

Finding a Career That Suits You: Play to Your Strengths

Robin Roman Wright, Career Coach at the Hallowell Center, dispels several misconceptions about finding a fulfilling career. Through her coaching she provides a proven approach for helping people with ADD identify career skills and determine occupations that would be satisfying and rewarding. In the article, she outlines some common misconceptions about finding fulfilling work. She also mentions the 7 steps in a proven methodology for finding work you enjoy and can be successful at.

Misconceptions Regarding Finding Meaningful Work

- I have ADD, my limitations and “disability” will prevent me from finding meaningful work.
- I have ADD, I don’t have any relevant gifts, talents or skills.
- I may have some strengths but my shortcomings will outweigh my strengths.
- I can find the most suitable jobs from the “Want Ads” or online job banks.
- I will get discouraged. I have done this before - I have looked for this type of job (whatever it is) in newspapers, online or in ways I’m used to and I don’t get anywhere.
- I will get discouraged. I will keep looking for another job in the same field or occupation that I have had difficulty with in the past.

The Reality of Finding Fulfilling Work

- Yes, you may have limitations, but everybody does whether or not they have ADD. The trick is self-awareness and recognizing how to avoid or compensate for those limitations.
- Yes, you may be unaware of your gifts and talents, but there are tried and true methods to figuring out the gifts that you have to offer the world of work.
- Yes, you may dismiss your strengths, but you can begin to learn where those strengths would be valued by employers.
- Yes, a small percentage of job hunters find work through newspaper ads and online job banks, but most find work through other approaches such as networking.

- Yes, the job hunt can be discouraging, but there are methods to follow and structures to put into place that will help you handle the inevitable setbacks and give you tools for looking for work in new ways and, if preferable, in fields and occupations that may be more suitable for you.

Robin Roman Wright provides a 7-Step process for finding a fulfilling career. She outlines that process below. Before you embark on your career search consider taking the following 7 steps:

1. Understand yourself – the more you know about yourself, the better when it comes to picking a career or selecting a particular job opportunity.

“The more you know about what you need, what you like, what you want and where you thrive, the less likely you are to fail.” Carol Christen, author of the recently released: *What Color Is Your Parachute? For Teens*, (Ten Speed Press).

 - Take self-assessments in order to understand such things as: your interpersonal style, your career interests, the environment that motivates you and your values. Self-assessments such as the DiSC[®] Personal Profile, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator[®] and the Self-Directed Search[®] are available when you sign up for career coaching at the Hallowell Center.
 - When you receive the assessments, review your summaries/ reports with a few close friends. Ask them, “What do you think? Do you see me this way?” Be prepared for honest feedback. Ask for explanations. Remember their feedback can help you figure out your strengths, what you need and where you might thrive in the world of work. While the feedback may not match with your self-perception, thank the people involved and review their comments several times. They may help you avoid a wrong turn in your career search.
 - Find out about “your kind of mind.” Some people with ADD will find it helpful to obtain a neuropsychological consult and/or a neuropsychological evaluation, both available at the Hallowell Center. This can give you further insight into your cognitive strengths and any limitations, or things to watch out for, in a work setting. This might include an assessment of reasoning skills, speed of learning, ability to resist distraction or temptation and/or organizational skills.
 - Identify your strengths. We all have strengths. We have exhibited these functional skills in the course of our lives, the things we have accomplished, challenges we have overcome or problems that we have solved. These are called these transferable skills (originally coined by Richard N. Bolles). Find out what yours are. They are the building blocks of any career exploration process. In my coaching, I help clients identify 7 life stories and then, using the list of skills listed in “What Color Is

Your Parachute 2006”, by Richard N. Bolles, assist clients as they identify their own 8 transferable skills.

2. Select the fields of knowledge that most interest you (ie: you are enthralled by them, you can't get enough information about these things)
3. Once you have identified your eight top transferable skills and the fields of knowledge that most interest you, you are ready to begin identifying where within the world of work having this knowledge and these transferable skills are valued. (In other words, someone is willing to pay you.)
4. The next step involves identifying job targets. You need to narrow down to three the number of occupations that interest you and where you have the skills, talents and abilities to contribute and make your mark. Again, coaching can help you winnow down the number of options and select the few job targets that are the most promising.
5. Now you are ready for the Job Search and Networking.
 - Remember as you proceed on with the job search, as Dr. Hallowell says, finding the right boss is key. You will have the most success in a future job where you get to know the person who you will be working for before you take the job. Networking is a powerful job search tool. It is also a great way to spend time with the person who has the power to hire you before he or she offers you the job. You can be informally interviewing them, while they are interviewing you.
 - The Job Search process can be long, tedious and discouraging. Develop a supportive group of people around you. Find healthy, life-affirming ways to reward yourself for doing the tasks involved in the job search each day. Use a coach, if that fits your style and budget, or a friend or a community job hunting support group.
6. When you land that job, enjoy. You have accomplished much.
7. Continue to learn and grow. Remember that we live in the twenty-first century, in the fast moving “job-free” world.¹ Keep learning and growing and keep those networks strong. You may find you are in this current organization for quite a long time or you may find that you move to a next job quickly. Whether a job move is your choice or not, don't take it personally. Instead see these changes in our fast moving economy as another chance to meet a challenge head on.

Finding a rewarding career, is a journey. A mentor of mine calls it a “Quest.” With a clear goal, a tried and true process, self-knowledge, guidance and steady steps taken towards the goal, you too can find a career that suits you and successfully land a job. There are resources listed below for those who would like to do some additional reading. If you would like to learn more about the Career Coaching services at the Hallowell Center contact Robin Roman Wright for a complementary 15 minute inquiry session. If you know that you would like to start career coaching just call the Hallowell Center and set-up an initial appointment.

Get started on a successful career path today!

¹ William Bridges, “Where Have All the Jobs Gone?” 1998.