## Chapter 4

## Adaptability in Action: Using Personality, **Interest, and Values Data to Help Clients Increase Their Emotional, Social, and Cognitive Career Meta-capacities**

#### Sarah D. Stauffer, Christian Maggiori, Ariane Froidevaux and Jérôme Rossier

**Abstract** Career adaptability encompasses the attitudes, behaviors, and competencies that people use "in fitting themselves into work that suits them" (Savickas, Career development and counseling: Putting theory and research to work, Hoboken, Wiley, p. 45, 2005). Savickas (The Career Development Quarterly, 45:247–259, 1997) proposed adaptability as a unifying concept to Super's (The psychology of careers. New York: Harper & Row, 1957; Career development in the 1980s: Theory and practice, pp. 28-42, Springfield: Thomas, 1981; Career choice and development, pp. 197–261 San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1990) life-span, life-space theory, essentially integrating the three major perspectives that Super elaborated: development, self, and context. Career adaptability includes four specific dimensions: concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. Career counselors can use these four dimensions dynamically within the counseling process to help clients better adapt their needs and capacities to different constraints imposed by the work environment (Savickas et al., Journal of Vocational Behavior, 75:239–250, 2009).

In this global, postmodern economy, people currently face a growing number of transitions, wherein they must manage several internal and external challenges of change (Ashford and Taylor, Research in personnel and human resources management, pp. 1-39, Greenwich: JAI Press, 1990). The use of a vocational battery that includes personality, interest, intelligence or aptitude, and values instruments in career counseling may help clients to identify their strengths and weaknesses, their emotional skill level, and increase their self-knowledge and career decision-making abilities (Rossier, International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance, 5:175-188, 2005) in order to use this knowledge and these skills more appropriately and effectively in the future. Sharing results from

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clients' personality, interests, and values inventories with them and showing them how their individual profiles have helped and hindered their career performance in the past helps them to build further strengths. Additionally, career counselors can use this data to help clients improve upon their social, emotional, and cognitive meta-capacities in order to become more adaptable individuals, capable of altering their cognitions, behaviors, and affect (Fugate et al., *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 65:14–38, 2004) to more easily enter—or reenter—the job market.

In this chapter, we will apply theoretical constructs to a case study from our consultation service. We aim to highlight, through the exploration of theory and practice, how career counselors can help clients become more adaptable and build their social, emotional, and cognitive meta-capacities through a brief career counseling intervention.

**Keywords** Career adaptability  $\cdot$  Interests  $\cdot$  Personality  $\cdot$  Values  $\cdot$  Emotional career meta-capacities  $\cdot$  Cognitive career meta-capacities  $\cdot$  Career counseling  $\cdot$  Emotional intelligence  $\cdot$  Employability  $\cdot$  Career construction theory  $\cdot$  Happenstance theory

#### Introduction

For many years, trait-and-factor theories have dominated the career counseling literature, as career counseling has consisted in helping clients match their personal traits and interests to job market demands to navigate school-to-work and work-towork career transitions. This type of matching depends largely on stability in the labor market context and in people's behavior (Krumboltz and Worthington 1999; Savickas et al. 2009). However, such labor market stability rarely exists in today's economic climate. Additionally, "human behavior is not only a function of the person but also of the environment" (Savickas et al. 2009, p. 240), rendering human behavior even less predictable. Savickas et al. (2009) implored career counselors to reconsider their assumptions regarding the theories and techniques they used in the past in order to better promote life-long learning, flexibility, and adaptability as sustainable concepts in career counseling in this postmodern, global economy. Understanding adaptability and career construction concepts and taking into account clients' social, emotional, and cognitive meta-capacities may provide career counselors with some solid theoretical foundations for helping clients mitigate career counseling and life designing challenges.

In this chapter, we explore how these key concepts and theories that support them, such as career construction (Savickas 1997, 2005), employability (Fugate et al. 2004), emotional intelligence (Mayer and Salovey 1997; Petrides and Furnham 2003), and happenstance learning theory (Krumboltz 1996, 2009), may be useful for helping clients gain insight into their current career and personal situations; how career counseling data from personality, interest, and values assessments may be used to help career counselors formulate working hypotheses and stimulate client insight;

and how to help clients develop their social, emotional, and cognitive abilities and their career meta-capacities. Ultimately, developing these meta-capacities, which is the capability to more efficiently use their abilities, will help clients to become more adaptable individuals who are more capable of "fitting themselves into work that suits them" (Savickas 2005, p. 45). The major goal of career counseling is helping clients "learn to take actions to achieve more satisfying career and personal lives—not to make a single career decision" (Krumboltz 2009, p. 135). We illustrate this chapter with a case study from our career counseling service to show how theory and practice inform each other to further clients' career counseling goals and build their career meta-capacities within the life-design frame of reference.

## **Integrative Approach to Career Counseling**

Several career counseling scholars (e.g., Heppner and Heppner 2003; Savickas et al. 2009) have called for more holistic approaches that go beyond information giving and testing in session. According to the Life Design International Research Group, a collaborative of career counseling scholars primarily from the US and Europe, "the life design model aims to help individuals articulate and enact a career story that supports adaptive and flexible responses to developmental tasks, vocational traumas, and occupational transitions" (Savickas et al. 2009, p. 245). Through life design, Savickas et al. (2009) suggested that building clients' abilities and their capacities to use them—and, as we would further argue, their meta-capacities—to prepare for and adapt to changing work environments would help clients execute career plans in their personal and professional contexts. Building emotional, social, or cognitive meta-capacities begins with acquiring and more closely examining clients' self-knowledge. Peterson et al. (2002) argued that the process of acquiring self-knowledge involves interpreting past events and reconstructing these interpretations "to fit present events in one's social context" (p. 321).

Life-design interventions rely on clients' self-awareness of their values, attitudes, habits, and identity, in addition to past and present barriers to meeting personal and professional objectives they have encountered in order to construct a fruitful career and life plan; the use of narrative construction is helpful in this process. In composing their stories, clients first chronologically organize salient career and life events, then re-examine these events with their counselors in order to identify, deconstruct, and reconstruct more helpful narratives that unblock personal or professional barriers and open new possibilities for career and personal advancement, but never with the idea of forgetting their past entirely (Savickas 2010). More specifically, life-design interventions aim to increase the five Cs of career construction theory: concern, control, curiosity, confidence, and commitment (Savickas et al. 2009). Adaptability is the pivotal constituent of career construction theory and the unifying concept proposed as an extension to Super's (1957, 1981, 1990) life-span, life-space theory, in which Super took the client's development, self, and context into account. According to Savickas (2005), "Adaptive individuals are conceptualized as: becoming *concerned* 

for their future as a worker, increasing personal *control* over their vocational future, displaying *curiosity* by exploring possible selves and future scenarios, and strengthening the *confidence* to pursue their aspirations" (p. 52). *Commitment* refers to clients' broader engagement to their life projects as opposed to one particular job (Savickas et al. 2009).

Krumboltz (2009) agreed with Savickas et al.'s (2009) position, and also wrote about the importance of clients being able to look beyond their immediate career decision to the evolving role of their careers in their lives. Through happenstance learning theory, Krumboltz (1996, 2009) elaborated that human behavior results from a combination of learning experiences from both planned and unplanned situations to which individuals are exposed. As Krumboltz (2009) explained, such situations arise partly as a function the actions that people take or are due, in part, to circumstances completely out of their control. Either way, clients can learn from these situations. Additionally, Krumboltz (2009) suggested ways career counselors can guide clients in controlling unplanned events, such as a chance encounter with someone from a company searching for workers in the client's interest area. Taking advantage of unplanned events includes consciously experiencing the events, taking actions to recognize potential learning opportunities, and initiating further actions to benefit from these events. In the case of a chance encounter, this may mean that the client initiates a conversation with the representative about his or her work skills and experience, then asks for the representative's business card with a promise to send his or her CV by e-mail within the next couple of days.

Although the life design intervention model relies more on co-constructing a client's career and life narratives through stories and activities, and not on test scores and interpretations (Savickas et al. 2009), Krumboltz (2009) argued that career assessments of all kinds (e.g., interest, personality, and beliefs inventories) can be used to promote self-knowledge and learning. We find it helpful to use and discuss clients' test scores directly with them in common language and to incorporate this information into the counselor and client's shared understanding of the client's work and life stories. Rossier (2005) argued that intelligence, interests, and personality concern different aspects of an individual that cannot be substituted for one another. Therefore, a vocational battery combining personality, interests, intelligence or aptitudes, and values inventories may be useful to further describe clients' strengths and weaknesses, to indicate clients' emotional skill level, and to help clients in career decision-making activities.

As Peterson et al. (2002) aptly noted, "Career problem solving and decision making involve the interaction of both affective and cognitive processes" (p. 318). The role of affectivity seems particularly salient in the career counseling process, considering the current changing professional landscape. People face a growing number of horizontal and vertical transitions, and frequently have to manage several internal and external challenges of change (Ashford and Taylor 1990) in which they have to be able to manage and alter their cognitions, behaviors, and affect (Fugate et al. 2004). In this context, fostering and improving adaptive emotional functioning and competences may help clients to cope with current labor market challenges and needs and to handle objective and affective challenges. Recently, several interventions and programs

have been developed to increase adults' employability capacities (e.g., adaptability, among others; e.g., Koen et al. 2013 and to enhance their use of daily emotional abilities and skills, e.g., Dacre Pool and Qualter 2012; Di Fabio and Kenny 2011; Nelis et al. 2011; Slaski and Cartwright 2003). Knowing more about clients' levels of emotional, cognitive, and social skills will help career counselors in designing activities and tailoring discussions to build clients' career meta-capacities and further improve their employability characteristics, career insertion activities, and overall life satisfaction (e.g., Dacre Pool and Qualter 2012; Petrides and Furnham 2003).

# Developing Emotional Meta-capacities: The Role of Emotional Intelligence and Employability in Career Counseling

Emotions -and their regulation- are an essential aspect of human experience and development (Izard 1971, 1977; Lazarus 1991), notably concerning individuals' social and physical adaptation to situations. Emotions contribute to determining human reactions, behaviors, and perceptions, and are relevant in all life domains, such as health, well-being, family, and work. Overall, emotional competences, such as expressing and understanding emotions, have important implications for psychological, social, physical, and professional adjustment. In the professional sphere, emotions have direct and indirect impacts on employability competences and several work-related outcomes, such as job satisfaction, work stress, work engagement, and burnout (Boland and Ross 2010; Genoud and Brodard 2012; Joseph and Newman 2010; Lopes et al. 2006). Researchers have found that low neuroticism (which is indicative of higher emotional stability) is positively correlated with job satisfaction and job performance (Judge and Bono 2001), and that emotional regulation is positively associated with higher academic achievement and job performance (Joseph and Newman 2010; Leroy and Grégoire 2007).

In the current literature, several concepts and models related to career functioning, employability, and work outcomes emphasize the role and impact of emotional abilities, such as emotional intelligence and emotional self-esteem. For example, Fugate et al. (2004) highlighted the central role played by affectivity for employability. More specifically, employability is a multidimensional concept that aggregates career identity, personal adaptability, and social and human capital dimensions, and represents a form of work-specific proactive adaptability. The psychosocial construct of employability embodies individual characteristics that foster adaptive cognition, behavior, and affect, and enhance the individual-work interface (Fugate et al. 2004). Meta-cognitive capacities, such as self-talk, self-awareness, and monitoring and controlling the regulation and integration of thought processes (Peterson et al. 2002), can be used to enhance emotional abilities and skills and to transfer these skills into behavioral change. Fugate et al. (2004) underscored the cognitive-affective nature of career planning as being as important as emotional intelligence is to the human capital of employability. It is imperative to stress that employability is conceptualized as enhancing movement between jobs, both between and within organizations

(Morrison and Hall 2002), and increases the possibilities of reemployment. McArdle et al. (2007) found that employability was positively related to job searching in that employable individuals took a more proactive approach to engaging in the labor market and, therefore, finding reemployment six months later.

During the last two decades, researchers have explored the role of emotional abilities and skills, such as emotional intelligence and emotional self-efficacy, in greater detail (Dacre Pool and Qualter 2012). Emotional intelligence (EI), also often labeled "emotional competence" or "emotional skills," (Nelis et al. 2011), is often conceived as an ability or as a trait, and refers to the perception, processing, regulation, and utilization of emotional information (Mayer and Salovey 1997; Petrides and Furnham 2003); EI has an important impact on several life domains, such as physical and mental health, social interaction, and work performance. Overall, EI is negatively associated with psychopathology and positively with general health, well-being-related variables (Malterer et al. 2008; Petrides et al. 2007) and job performance and occupational success, especially for work centered on interpersonal relations, such as nursing (Bachman et al. 2000; Nelis et al. 2011). Emotional self-efficacy (ESE), which is concerned with beliefs in one's emotional functioning capabilities, has recently been shown to be important in relation to academic achievement and graduate employability (Dacre Pool and Qualter 2012).

Based notably on Mayer and Salovey's (1997) model, Nelis et al. (2011) developed an 18-hour intervention to improve EI and other general emotional competences, such as better understanding emotions in order to effectuate change on daily behaviors and thoughts. Moreover, they aimed to facilitate the transfer of these competences in the daily lives of young adults. In this program, they proposed theoretical knowledge and training and exercises, including role-plays, homework, group discussion, and simulation exercises, to enhance specific emotional skills. Nelis et al. (2011) observed that this intervention induced an improvement of several components of EI (e.g., emotional understanding, identification and regulation) that persisted over the long-term (6 months or more). Additionally, these interventions also led to benefits in general health, quality of social functioning, psychological well-being, and objective employability or work success. Di Fabio and Kenny (2011) used an abilitybased model of EI to train high school students to overcome decisional problems. In their study, increases in EI abilities and self-reported EI were associated with reductions in students' levels of indecisiveness and career decision difficulties. Dacre Pool and Qualter (2012) implemented an intervention with undergraduate students based on theoretical and practical activities, which included discussion, role-play, and case studies, to foster EI and ESE. Their program addressed emotional perception, understanding, and using and managing emotion. They showed that it was possible to increase ESE and emotion regulation skills (e.g., understanding and managing emotion). Others programs have been implemented to foster other personal resources. Koen et al. (2013) developed a program to increase long-term unemployed individuals' job search activities and attitudes, knowledge, and skills related to employability dimensions. They concluded that reemployment interventions are useful for developing employability, even with people who had been unemployed over a long term.

Overall, current findings support the vision of emotional abilities as a central element for employability and work success and have shown that it is possible to increase young adults' and middle-aged adults' (e.g., Koen et al. 2013) emotional abilities and work-related competences, even after a relatively brief training. Moreover, these changes are persistent and emotion-centered interventions seem to lead to a number of other benefits, such as improvements in general health and well-being, most notably in terms of happiness, mental health, life satisfaction, and the quality of social relationships (Nelis et al. 2011). Although programs to improve these abilities could be particularly pertinent in unemployment circumstances (Nelis et al. 2011), it is necessary to adapt and test these interventions with unemployed workers, and specifically long-term unemployed populations. Such an adapted approach to research and intervention should take several key factors into consideration in order to produce the best results for clients in these and other difficult circumstances.

### **Practical Implications for Career Counseling and Guidance**

Whiston et al. (1998) found individual sessions to be the most effective and efficient career counseling treatment modality. Several key ingredients found in individual career counseling interventions make this type more advantageous for clients and more efficacious in terms of career-specific and non-career-specific outcomes. A "common factors approach" (Imel and Wampold 2008, p. 249) that utilizes ingredients key to all forms of psychotherapeutic intervention aids in better understanding the process (Norcross 2005) and is important to the success of the intervention (Imel and Wampold 2008). More specifically, based on meta-analyses (e.g., Brown and Ryan Krane 2000; Ryan 1999), Brown et al. (2003) identified five critical ingredients related to career choice outcomes that were each individually important to include and had even greater effect in combination: workbooks and written exercises, individualized interpretations and feedback, world of work information, modeling, and attention to building support.

Additionally, the importance of tending to individual client characteristics and their impact on relational factors in counseling has been well documented. Masdonati et al. (2009) studied the impact of the working alliance on our individual career counseling intervention. They found that the working alliance was positively correlated with clients' satisfaction with the intervention and their overall satisfaction with life at the end of counseling, and negatively correlated with clients' career indecision. It stands to reason that clients and counselors who agree more on counseling goals and how to achieve them will have a stronger bond (Bordin 1979) and, therefore, will share more pertinent and useful information in session that leads to less career indecision. Consequentially, working alliance moderated Masdonati et al.'s (2009) intervention, such that high working alliance was associated with greater effectiveness. Several authors have called for research and career counseling interventions designed to take clients' individual characteristics into account (e.g., Blustein et al. 2005; Hartung et al. 1998; Whiston and Rahardja 2008). Stauffer et al. (2013) took

personality, career decision-making, satisfaction with life, and satisfaction with the intervention into account in the intervention described below. The intervention was less effective with clients with high neuroticism and low conscientiousness; and older clients, who were typically making a work-to-work transition, had lower satisfaction with life than younger clients making a school-to-work transition.

According to Krumboltz (2009), the success of career counseling lies in "the extent to which clients thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in the real world have changed" (p. 148). To determine the effectiveness of our career counseling intervention over the long term, Perdrix et al. (2012) qualitatively examined clients' career project implementation progress at 6-months post-intervention and 1-year post-intervention via follow-up questionnaires returned by 78 former clients who participated in the study. They found that a great majority of clients had implemented the career project discussed in session one year after career counseling sessions (64%), some had partially implemented their plans (12%), some had changed their career choice but successfully implemented this new choice without further advisement (12%), and others had not advanced in implementing plans discussed in session or any other choice during this time frame (12%). These real-world behavioral indicators of career project implementation served as encouraging evidence that our career counseling intervention was successful for 88% of our clients within the year that followed intervention.

## **Our Career Counseling Intervention**

Our intervention consisted of four or five 1-hour face-to-face weekly career counseling sessions that included at least four of the five critical ingredients identified by Brown et al. (2003). Advanced master's-level career counseling students provided guidance and counsel using written exercises, individualized interpretation and feedback, world of work information, and attention to building social and moral support; however, modeling was not systematically present in each client's intervention when an individual need for modeling was not deemed necessary (Masdonati et al. 2009).

Clients paid a fixed price for the intervention according to their student/employment status, irrespective of the number of sessions (four or five) they received. Qualified counselors employed at the university closely supervised student career counselors in their work, as all sessions were viewed live by supervisors and fellow supervisees via closed-circuit video connection. The common viewing of all sessions is very helpful for training purposes, as the student counselor can process information gleaned in session with his or her fellow supervisees and supervisor in order to collectively generate working hypotheses and a myriad of possible solutions and alternatives to clients' presenting problems. Additionally, all sessions were videotaped and intervention from supervisors was directly given, when needed, to ensure that a certain standardization of the intervention was maintained in light of adaptations made to suit individual clients' needs.

#### The Case of Joanne

## Joanne's Request for Career Counseling

Joanne (pseudonym, details also disguised to protect client anonymity) is a single, Belgian woman in her early thirties who finished her second master's degree at a Belgian university two years ago. She moved to Switzerland with her boyfriend after graduating and found a job as an accountant in a prominent financial company. When the counselor asked her how she was doing, she answered, "I'm doing a lot of soul searching these days!" She voluntarily sought career counseling, stating that she "felt bored at work." She explained that she was not really interested in accounting, and that her relationships with her colleagues were really stressful. She felt different from them, and described them as "cold, cynical, and interested mostly in making money."

Early on in the counseling process, Joanne was laid off from her accounting job due to downsizing at her company. She was one of the first to be released due to mutual dissatisfaction in the strained relationships she had with her supervisor and co-workers. This tension and the resulting layoff made her feel very nervous, because she was concerned about how to approach looking for a new job or field and her ability to support herself financially. So, her request for career counseling quickly evolved from finding a job environment in the business field better suited to her values without having to re-invest in further educational pursuits, into re-examining her career aspirations and opportunities altogether in light of the relationship issues that had been recently triggered in her professional life and reactivated from her painful past family experiences.

## Personal and Educational Background

Joanne is the middle child of three girls. Her older sister is a well-known and respected engineer, and her younger sister is currently finishing a medical degree. Joanne sees herself as inferior to her sisters. She described how she despises herself, because both of her sisters are successful in their careers and she is envious that they never doubted which careers they wanted to pursue. Joanne feels like she is the only one of the three who is encountering difficulties in her career, who hesitates between choices, and has been the only one to lose her job. In addition, her sisters' studies—engineering and medicine—were more prestigious than her first pursuit—music theory.

Joanne has played the piano since she was 7 years old. She reported encountering serious family stressors after finishing high school, when her parents divorced. For many years prior to their divorce, though, her father, who worked in an industrial plant, was violent with her mother, who was a housekeeper, and with the children; often, Joanne was afraid to return home from school. Music was her refuge from a difficult home life, so she made the "logical" decision to study music theory in

college, and later completed a master's degree in music theory. Although she taught piano as a master's student in music theory, she neither wanted to become a full-time piano teacher nor a professional musician. Although Joanne was talented at playing the piano, even as a child, she realized the limitations of her employment possibilities, and piano became more of a hobby for her than a true career aspiration. So, Joanne undertook a second master's degree in Marketing and Management at the same Belgian university in order to guarantee her many diverse job opportunities. Two years after finishing that degree, she and her boyfriend moved to Switzerland when he found employment; she found a job as an accountant shortly thereafter in a prominent financial company. Her relationship ended one year later.

Joanne was seeing an outside therapist at the same time as she sought career counseling, mostly to process her family history of domestic violence, which is still hard for her to live with today. As a result of the trauma she witnessed and experienced in her family of origin, her therapist diagnosed her with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), from which she continues to suffer today. Although Leung (2008) argued that "a skillful career counselor should be just as able to mediate this [career and personal aspects of life] dispute as a marriage counselor" (p. 141), it is important to note that, in Switzerland, career counselors are not trained in psychotherapy techniques or practice. Therefore, we whole-heartedly encouraged Joanne to continue with her outside therapy sessions in parallel to and after the termination of the career counseling services we were providing.

## **Career Counseling Process**

Joanne received four career counseling sessions at our university-run career counseling service. In the first session, she and her career counselor got acquainted and began building their working alliance, and Joanne shared both her background history and her motives for seeking career counseling. At the end of the first session, Joanne was asked to complete a homework exercise to clarify what she wanted to keep from her first two professional experiences (as a piano teacher and an accountant), and what aspects of these jobs she wanted to avoid in a future job.

During the second session, Joanne discussed the homework assignment with her career counselor. First, they analyzed her current job as an accountant. According to Joanne, this exercise shed light on how she reacted to events, and that she wanted to change those reactions in the future. She explained that she analyzed challenges at work too superficially. She gave an example: "For one year now, I've known that I really do not like my job, but I have done nothing to change that. It was only when I started to lose sleep over it that I decided to do something." She described a conflict situation at work with her superior, explaining that she felt "very anxious and threatened, like when I was a little girl," linking her reaction directly to the history of domestic violence in her family. Concretely, what she really could no longer stand was the work atmosphere, which she described as "rigid and threatening." Ultimately, this exercise enabled her to realize that her current job as an accountant was not

entirely negative: She liked working with clients to resolve their financial concerns, working on a productive team, writing, and completing administrative tasks.

In the second part of the exercise, Joanne and her counselor analyzed her job as a musician and a piano teacher. What Joanne wanted to keep from this experience for her next job was teaching. She expressed interest in teaching adults in the future. She also really liked taking part in a musical ensemble, so teamwork was also important to her in a future job. What she wanted to avoid in the future was the financial precariousness of this job, and the huge stress she felt before playing in musical concerts. While playing, she felt judged to the point that she began to take antianxiety medicines before performing in order to manage her feelings and physical sensations of anxiety. Another important observation made by her student counselor and this counselor's supervision group was that Joanne, again, described herself as being the predominant problem in this job, because she not only had difficulties in dealing with stress and anxiety, but she also lacked self-confidence. For Joanne, playing the piano became associated mostly with "bad memories."

Further along in the second session, her career counselor asked Joanne to list some objectives she had for the next 5–10 years. Joanne spontaneously provided objectives relating to professional goals and characteristics she sought in future work environments. She listed working in a managerial capacity, because she wanted to use her compassion for others to help different people to achieve their goals. The characteristics she sought in a future work environment were autonomy, stability, a good atmosphere, a great team with which to work, and above all, "peace and calm." In the second part of this exercise, Joanne recorded some of her dreams. She listed writing books, teaching at a university, playing piano in concerts from time to time as a hobby, and, finally, feeling fulfilled in a romantic relationship and creating a family of her own someday.

During the third session, the results of Joanne's interest, values, and personality assessments (see below), which she completed between sessions, were discussed with her in order for Joanne and her counselor to better understand her strengths and weaknesses, and to help her focus on things that she might wish to change (Krumboltz 2009). The battery that Joanne completed was comprised of valid and reliable instruments regionally normed and often used in western Switzerland. To save time in session, she was provided with a username and password to access the instruments on line from home, and the results were sent directly to the counseling center. Leung (2008) supported and encouraged the use of locally-developed reliable and valid measures that account for cultural adaptations and norms in career counseling practice. After the first session, she completed the Listes des Verbes/Listes des Métiers (LIVAP/LIMET; Gendre et al. 2006), an interest inventory that includes a list of activities and occupations; and the Inventaire de Valeurs Professionnelles et Générales (IVPG; Gendre et al. 2011), a personal and professional values questionnaire. After the second session, she completed the Liste des Adjectifs Bipolaires en Échelle de Likert [sic] (LABEL; Gendre and Capel 2013), a personality profile. We did not assess Joanne's aptitudes because in successfully completing two university master's degrees, we assumed that she possessed high intellectual capacities that would enable her to do any kind of work, however demanding.

The LIVAP/LIMET revealed very few interests, if any. Of Holland's (1966) six schemes for personality and vocational characteristics (e.g., Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional; RIASEC), Joanne scores revealed only a slight interest in entrepreneurial activities and jobs. This was surprising, because she seemed to be generally very enthusiastic and curious. Moreover, given that Joanne is a talented musician, the artistic side was surprisingly absent, as well as the social side, as she had thought about teaching at a university as a possible future plan. Personality results on the LABEL indicated that Joanne is very altruistic and agreeable, but revealed very high anxiety and feelings of stress. Her level of PTSD certainly had an impact on the results regarding the anxiety she exhibited. Such a level of anxiety may generate difficulties in expressing a differentiated profile of career interests, which Joanne confirmed. Finally, the main values resulting from the IVPG were pleasure, aesthetics, and altruism.

During the last session, Joanne and her career counselor talked about the strengths of her resume and her major skills—mostly planning and social skills. As an appraisal of the counseling process, Joanne stated that she would not repeat the same "mistake" as she had before: Even if she felt very anxious about being unemployed, she would not "choose" the easiest route to employment and seek another job as an accountant in another organization, as she came to hate the job as much as the environment in which she performed it. Instead, she wanted to follow her quest for a calmer working environment and professional and personal happiness. She clarified her priorities: to feel good and satisfied in her work, and to seek a job with fewer challenges.

## Joanne's Emotional, Social, and Cognitive Strengths and Weaknesses

Discussing the results of the three questionnaires with Joanne lead her to several reflections and revelations concerning her current situation. First, it shed light on her social values. Altruism was important both in Joanne's values and personality questionnaires. The counselor reinforced how pleasant it was to work with her, as well as her extraversion and her pleasure in being with others, for example spending time with friends each weekend. From the beginning, Joanne highlighted her difficulties with her boss and her colleagues, mostly men, whom she found "cold, cynical, and interested mostly in making money." With high scores on values such as commitment, work atmosphere, solidarity, altruism, and benevolence, it became clear that good relationships were one of the most important factors for Joanne's well-being at work.

Second, the personality questionnaire highlighted the gravity of Joanne's current anxiety and stress (at more than 1.5 SD above that of the average population). We discussed how, generally, Joanne is an anxious person, which she attributed to her family history of domestic violence. However, her unemployed status also was particularly hard for her to deal with emotionally. She explained that through outside therapy she was coming to understand how her lack of secure attachment in childhood (Bowlby 1982) was affecting her current emotional stability. She still feels

hurt many years later; the reactivation of her past relationship issues worsened her current problems in the workplace, and this monopolized a lot of her energy. As Peterson et al. (2002) explained, "Each time a present event triggers an association to episodes in the past, we may not only reconstruct our past in a subtle way but shape our self-concept as well" (p. 321–322). Joanne recounted that she used to be ambitious about her career goals but, now, she is more fervent about seeking personal happiness. Given that symptoms of anxiety and PTSD can prevent an individual's healthy vocational development, it is important that career counseling reinforce certain emotional competences, such as emotion regulation, communication, and ESE (Dacre Pool and Qualter 2012); and this was especially true in Joanne's case.

Third, Joanne realized that she had hated her accounting job almost since the very beginning, but that she "chose" that profession because it was a field in which Switzerland was lacking workers. She admitted that her first choice of music theory did not constitute a real choice, either, but it was the easiest solution to a difficult career problem she could not deal with at that moment. She and her career counselor jointly concluded that throughout her life, Joanne had never really thought about and balanced different career options against her true professional interests and personal well-being. In her early thirties, Joanne now understands that her previous career selections did not adequately take her well-being and values into account.

With the help of her career counselor, Joanne realized that she did not need to undertake entirely new studies, but rather to find a work environment that is better aligned with her values. She decided not to apply for jobs in finance and not to work for a company that was too demanding where profit-seeking and competition, overtime hours expectations, etc, were concerned. By contrast, she was seeking a work opportunity in which she could learn from and with clients and colleagues. Joanne summarized her main career objective as "finding a healthy, stable and protective work environment, and combining my interpersonal skills with my entrepreneurial interest."

# Conclusions: Conceptualizing Joanne's Career Counseling Issues from an Integrative Perspective

In Joanne's career and life stories, she has faced a number of vocational and personal traumas (Savickas et al. 2009), which have led to the current life transitions she faces. She was seeking a financially stable source of employment that would not "bore" her but, rather, make good use of the cognitive and interpersonal resources that would enable her to successfully lead a team in another line of work. Through her career counseling sessions, Joanne demonstrated several adapt-abilities described in career construction theory, as well as a *commitment* to furthering life pursuits beyond finding her next stable occupation (Savickas 2005). For instance, from the moment that Joanne actively sought career counseling to help her find a new field or job in which she could apply her education and skills in an atmosphere and state of mind of "peace and calm," she demonstrated *concern* for her future as a

worker. She took measures to *increase her control* over her professional future by setting specific standards for what she wanted in her next job, such as autonomy and a good work atmosphere with team-oriented colleagues, then actively seeking employment opportunities that corresponded with these standards. Although she was unable to control being laid off, she explored how she could use her skills and apply her emotional, cognitive, and social strengths to finding a more fulfilling job in another line of work. Through her *curiosity* to explore her *self* in future scenarios, Joanne and her career counselor discussed the results of her personality, interests, and values inventories to more thoroughly consider how to improve upon her personal and professional relationships. Personally, she concluded that outside therapy was helpful to her in seeking more fulfilling family and romantic relationships; professionally, Joanne concluded that she could use her compassion and collective interest to help others achieve their goals by seeking a management role on a team.

Both Joanne and her career counselor remarked that she lacked self-confidence and suffered from anxiety and PTSD symptoms as a result of the traumatic personal and professional experiences she had lived. Peterson et al. (2002) highlighted that the complexity of contextual factors stemming from familial, societal, workplace, or economic hardships could render career decision making more or less difficult. Joanne's familial history of domestic violence proved to be such a factor in her past and present career decision-making processes. Through career counseling and outside therapy sessions, Joanne was working on *strengthening her confidence* in order to achieve her career and life goals. Joanne's *commitment* to broader engagement in life projects was evident in the fact that she did not want to give up playing the piano entirely, despite the anxiety and stress playing professionally once invoked, but compromising by relegating her practice to a non-stress-inducing hobby. Professionally, this commitment involved using her cognitive and social capacities to help clients and faculty members in her new job to achieve their goals and tasks.

Krumboltz (1996, 2009) insisted that people could learn from any planned or unplanned circumstance and could turn those lessons into adaptive skills and capacities. In Joanne's case, she planned her educational routes in pursuing two master's degrees based on her past experiences and training in music and her entrepreneurial interests, respectively. By realistically exploring and analyzing these experiences, as well as the possibility of applying her skills and interests to the world of work, she determined that she could use aspects of both professions in finding a more suitable work alternative (Savickas 2005). Two unplanned situations, having experienced domestic violence in her family of origin and more recently having been laid off, presented Joanne with opportunities for learning more about herself, her personal and professional skills and career adapt-abilities. Her career counselor helped Joanne increase her meta-capacities by teaching her how to use these skills and adapt-abilities more effectively to successfully navigate the vocational trauma and resulting changes this trauma incited in her life.

Joanne could not control her former company's economic need to layoff workers, but she realized that her strained interpersonal relationships with her supervisor and co-workers played an integral part in her being one of the first to have to leave the company. In this unplanned and difficult turn of events, which reactivated the

traumatic history of familial domestic violence she experienced, Joanne accepted her social and interpersonal relationship issues as a means of learning more about herself and processed this information from a professional stand point in career counseling and a personal stand point in outside therapy. She took the opportunity to grow through these difficulties and to further explore how she could be helpful to others in a new managerial capacity. The fact that she willingly grappled with her fears and interpersonal issues head on in both career counseling and outside therapy demonstrated her social and emotional meta-capacities to confront difficult situations, learn from them, and begin to *transform* them into personal skills and strengths. Joanne was managing several internal and external challenges (Ashford and Taylor 1990) as a result of the transitions she faced, and through her counseling and therapy work, was learning how to change her cognitions, behaviors, and affect (Fugate et al. 2004), in order to effectuate changes in her responses to others and to solicit a different interactional pattern from others.

During her career counseling sessions, Joanne became extremely motivated to find another job that would make her happier than this last one. She continued her outside therapy in parallel to career counseling. She processed the negative emotions resulting from her traumatic familial past in therapy and the relationship issues that surfaced from her recent unemployment, as well as her doubts about her future career options in career counseling. The career counseling process helped Joanne to reframe her relationships with her two sisters, and the inadequacies that she felt relative to the prestige of the professions the three of them had chosen to pursue.

Recalling that Krumboltz (2009) measured the success of any career counseling intervention by the extent to which clients were capable of transforming their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors into real-world change, we were pleased to learn that Joanne interviewed for and accepted a job as a program coordinator in a business school a few days after terminating career counseling sessions. Joanne's career counselor learned of her progress through an e-mail Joanne sent three weeks after she started the new job. She reported that this job is easier than her previous one, as it is very administrative, and that she would work fewer hours but be paid the same salary as in her previous accounting position. She would have contact with many people, both students and faculty members at the business school. Joanne stated that the fact that this job was not cognitively demanding would help her advance her personal goals outside of her professional concerns and allow her to fully pursue her outside therapy. In her e-mail, Joanne thanked her counselor and the counselor's supervisor for the work they had done together and stated that she really was thrilled with her new position. Through the help of her career counselor, Joanne was able to strengthen and employ her emotional, social, and cognitive abilities and career meta-capacities in order to fit herself into work that suits her.

## **Chapter Summary**

Theory and practice should never be fully separate from one another. In this chapter, concepts from career construction (Savickas 2005), employability (Fugate et al. 2004), emotional intelligence (Mayer and Salovey 1997; Petrides and Furnham

2003), happenstance learning theory (Krumboltz 1996, 2009), and life design (Savickas et al. 2009) were used conjointly to illustrate the case of Joanne. The four sessions of career counseling that Joanne received enabled her to reconsider her life both personally and professionally. The interests, personality, and values questionnaires gave pertinent indications about her social, emotional, and cognitive abilities and helped her to increase her career meta-capacities, which could only emerge within the trusting relationship she developed with her career counselor (Rossier, in press). She and her career counselor co-constructed a new meaning and understanding of the intersection between her personal life history and her previous career choices, which revealed new professional and personal goals for Joanne to follow.

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