

CAREER EXPLORATION

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Tips for Uncertain Times

Acknowledge your emotions: Often times when we think of career development, we think of the practical steps such as working on a resume, sending out job applications, and interviewing. However our emotions influence if and how we engage in the process, what options we consider, and how we present ourselves to an employer in our job search documents and in person. During this time you may be feeling a variety of emotions including fear, anger, denial, sadness, confusion, excitement, and gratitude. Whatever you are feeling, name it, write it down, and be with it. **By acknowledging our emotions, we are able to have compassion for ourselves, not let our emotions control us, and approach career development from a centered place.**

1

Engage in activities that bring you joy: Part of career exploration and development is connecting to ourselves and what fulfills us.

Think back and write down a list of activities that you enjoy engaging in. These activities will be different for everyone but a few examples could be writing, engaging in a creative activity, exercising, reading for pleasure, cooking, or learning a new skill. Pick a few activities from your list and leave some time every week to engage in these activities. These activities can be great self-care, a way to shift your mindset, and provide insights on what makes you come alive.

2



Focus on what is in your control: One thing that can make uncertain times like these so difficult is feeling like we don't have control over our external environment. If we focus too much on what we can not control, it can lead to feelings of helplessness.

However, we can move out of this feeling of helplessness into action. **The key is to acknowledge that there are things out of our control and to shift our focus on what is in our control.**

Here are some ideas of career developmental activities you can engage in today:

3



3 Stories: Often people know what they don't like or want but find it difficult to tap into what they are actually looking for. It can be helpful to look back in order to move forward. One activity that I often give to students is to write out 3 experiences where they felt fulfilled. These stories do not have to be career or academically related. When writing out the stories, try to be as specific as possible about what you were doing, who you were with, what type of environment were in, and what made it fulfilling. **This activity can help you gain insight, notice themes, and begin to build a roadmap towards what you actually want.**



Searching without applying: Another activity that can help is searching through job/internship descriptions without the intent of applying. Don't worry if you are not presently qualified for the position or if it's not related to your major. You can use various websites to search positions including: [Indeed](#), [Idealist](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Handshake](#). In searching positions try to use search terms related to your interest, values, and skills. **The goal is to see what different tasks, positions, and environments you are drawn to.**



Informational Interviews: Once you gain some general understanding of who you are and what you find fulfilling, the next step is to gain more information about the various career paths you are considering. The best way to do this through what is called an informational interview. This is where you contact someone working in the field you are considering and see if they would be willing to talk to you about their experiences over the phone or video chat. You may ask questions about how they

got into the field, what education and skills are required, what a typical day looks like, and advice they would have for someone starting in the field. Remember the purpose of the informational interview is not to ask someone for a job. So where do you find these professionals to do informational interviews with? Some suggestions are through family and friends, browsing through profiles on LinkedIn, and by searching company websites. The Gordon Career Center also has some wonderful resources to get connected to alumni. For example here is a link to their [Cardinals helping Cardinals](#) webpage with a list of Wesleyan alumni who have said they are open to be contacted and support you during this time.

Free Online Course: Career Decisions, a new online course on Coursera, aims to help learners understand their motivations, strengths, and goals and appreciate how personal identity affects career decision making. This is taught by adult developmental psychologist and career counselor, Sharon Belden Castonguay, Director of the Gordon Career Center at Wesleyan University and is offered free of charge to Wesleyan students and alumni.

Careers By Design: The Interviews podcast explores the careers of some of Wesleyan's famous alumni. How do people decide what careers to pursue? Hear from scientists, entertainers, business people, academics, politicians, and everyone in between about how they designed paths that were right for them.

First Year Out: podcast looks at the college-to-work transition through the eyes of recent graduates and brings in experts to discuss topics including achieving success at your first job, handling stress, self-awareness, and managing money.

Neal Sardana's interest in the intersection between career and mental health began as he was figuring out his own career path. The process of exploration and discovery was so empowering that it prompted him to obtain a Master's of Counseling with a Specialization in Career Development. Neal enjoys helping individuals gain a better understanding of who they are and bring their authentic self into all aspects of their life and career development.



Resources