QUEST FOR DIRECTION
What Should I Be? What Should I Do?
Where Should I Go?

It’s a Monday morning. You get out of bed and look out the window to find that the weather is miserable. As you realize that you have five minutes to get to class, the phone rings. You flip your phone open and hear your Mother’s voice. She asks have you picked a major, are you getting good grades, and what you are going to do after graduation. As you stare blankly ahead, listening to your Mother on the phone cradled between shoulder and ear, you find yourself with no answers to any questions.

There are the times when the questions about the direction of your life haunt you like school-yard bullies. The answers can seem completely hidden. Feelings of frustration, chaos, and anger can sometimes follow. It can be hard to remember and harder to act on the fact that the answers are always inside you.

Before you can decide what you want to be, you first have to discover who you are.

By looking inward, you have the ability to understand whether or not the route that you are traveling will make you happy in life. Unfortunately, young people aren’t encouraged to think about who they are and what they enjoy doing. It is never too late to start. That is what this handout is all about: providing activities and questions to help you figure out who you are, what you value, what you should do, and where you should go.

You might also think about getting a coach to help you clarify your answers. Career coaching is available at Career Services and the Counseling Center. Talking to friends and family can also be helpful. You will get feedback, insights, and, of course, more questions. Journeys are easier when they are shared.

So ask yourself one question: are you truly being who you want to be?

“Real success is finding your lifework in the work that you love.”

David McCullough
The Big Questions

In addition to the question “are you being who you want to be,” take some time and discuss with a friend, think about, and/or journal your responses to the following questions.

- What is most important to you in life?
- How will the answer to Question 1 affect your potential career goals?
- Of what groups are you a member? List as many as you can.
  (Think big: Homo sapiens, Americans, New Yorkers and Small: model builder, green eyes, left handed, knitter, sport/music/art fan)
- What qualities have you adopted from friends, family, culture?
- What are the values and limitations of my culture? *
- What are my real talents, preferences, skills, and longings? *
- What are my fears? *
- How do you handle stress?
- What do you like/dislike about people?
- How do you interact with people?
- What does it mean/look like if you act genuinely?
- Who are some people you admire? What are some of the qualities that you admire in others that are also yours or that you want to be yours?
- An alien scientist meets and interviews you for research on how humans are different; what does it write about you?
- List five words that describe the key aspects/ strengths of your personality?
- What is the value of your name? Your word? Can people trust you?
- Name one of two beliefs/values for which no one would ever be able to change your mind. Where did you pick up this belief/value?
- How would you describe your connection with the “real you”? Your family? Community? Nature? The world? The universe?
- Are you at ease with who you are?
- Who do you really want to become? *
- Are you lovable?
- Do you want friendship, partnership, marriage? If so, why? With whom? *
- Do you want to bring children into this world? *
- Do your actions make any real difference in the bigger scheme of things? *
- What is your society, or life, or god, asking of you? Anything? *
- What is the meaning of money? *
- Is there a master plan? Are you wasting time you will regret later? *
- What constitutes meaningful work? *
- What do you want the future to look like for yourself, for others, for your planet? *
- When do you feel most alive? *
- Where/when are you creative? *
- What do you really want to learn? *
- Where do you want to put your stake in the ground and invest your life? *

* From Sharon Daloz-Parks, Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Faith
What Do You Think About Me?

First, describe you using five words or phrases. Then, ask three friends you trust with serious questions to do the same. What words or themes are repeated? How does your self-perception differ from your friend’s perception of you?

Self description
1. __________________________
2. __________________________
3. __________________________
4. __________________________
5. __________________________

Friend A:
1. __________________________
2. __________________________
3. __________________________
4. __________________________
5. __________________________

Friend B:
1. __________________________
2. __________________________
3. __________________________
4. __________________________
5. __________________________

Friend C:
1. __________________________
2. __________________________
3. __________________________
4. __________________________

Influential People

Who have been the three most influential people in your life? Why?

Person 1: __________________________
1. __________________________
2. __________________________
3. __________________________
4. __________________________
5. __________________________

Person 2: __________________________
1. __________________________
2. __________________________
3. __________________________
4. __________________________
5. __________________________

Person 3: __________________________
1. __________________________
2. __________________________
3. __________________________
4. __________________________
**Defining Moments**

What have been four defining moments in your life? Defining moments are experiences or events that deeply affected who you are, what you believe, what you want to do, and/or where you want to go. Think back over your life and, in the spaces below, first write a brief description of the experience then describe the impact it had. Defining moments can be happy or sad; achievements, tragedies, or just times of insight. Think about how they helped shape who you are? How will they continue to affect your future?

A. Experience
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Impact:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

B. Experience
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Impact:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

C. Experience
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Impact:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

“It is our choices ... that show who we truly are, far more than our abilities.”

*Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*
“Slow down and enjoy life. It’s not only the scenery you miss by going too fast—you also miss the sense of where you are going and why.”

Eddie Cantor
(American comedian, singer, actor, songwriter)

In What Are You Interested?

What are you passionate about? What do you do for fun?

What are your favorite television shows, movies, and books? Why?

What are the characteristics of the people you like to “hang” with most often? How or why are their characteristics YOUR characteristics?

If you could have free subscriptions to three magazines for the rest of your life, what three magazines would you choose?

What places do you most like to visit and visit most often? Why?

What in this world would you like to see changed?

If you could wake up tomorrow to any one miracle coming true, what would that miracle be?

Interests: New and Old

Old Hobbies
What did you love to do when you were a small child? Did you play in the mud? Did you take dance classes or build forts? Think back, write down any activities you LOVED doing or even things you WISH you could have done as a kid.

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
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New Interests
The activities you loved as a kid are clues to activities you might still enjoy. Similarly, things you wanted to do as a kid can be finally tried as an adult. Make a list below of hobbies or interests worth exploring now? Also, what careers might be connected with the activities you enjoyed as a kid? You can also ask around and find people who do those things and ask to meet them and talk about their careers.

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
**HOW DO YOU EXPRESS YOURSELF?**

Put your creativity to work!

- Do you like to write stories, articles, biographies, books, etc?
- Do you find painting, drawing, pastels, watercolors, and the like extremely enjoyable?
- Do you like to work with music? Create it? Sing it? Compose it? Play it?
- Do you express yourself in blogs on the internet or in a diary?
- Do you like to use your body to express feelings and emotions, as in acting or dance?
- Do you enjoy taking pictures? Creating slideshows?
- Do you enjoy creating things with your hands, such as woodwork, construction, clothes, ceramics, etc?
- Do you like to decorate things, such as rooms, clothes, furniture, etc?
- Do you create and maintain internet websites?

First off, have you thought about careers that would allow you to use your areas of creativity? Yes, you may need to learn and practice more to make a living at your art, but it’s entirely possible!

Second, even if you don’t want to make a living at it, you can use your creativity to explore questions about identity, meaning, direction, and purpose. Give yourself an assignment to create a piece of art (like a mandala - see back page) that shows:

- Who you are and what you believe
- Your goals for the future
- The kind of people you call friends and why
- Other kinds of art or artists who inspire you, or
- Your life’s story to this point

**WHY DO YOU WANT TO WORK?**

You are thinking you do not WANT to work, you NEED to work, and the reason is MONEY. OK, yes, but if money is the only benefit of work, then any job will pay you. For work to fulfill your life and give you happiness or maybe not stress you out and make you unhappy, you should think about why you want to work or what you want to get out of it...apart from money. Think about the needs listed below. Which of them are or might be important to you? Check all that apply:

**Economic Needs**
- I want to save for long-term goals (home, car, trips, and education).
- I want to keep my family together.
- I want to save money.
- I want benefits (insurance, retirement, etc.).

**Social Needs**
- I want to meet people and make friends.
- I want to be with people who share my interests.
- I want to raise my social status.
- I want to help others.

**Personal Needs**
- I want to feel a sense of achievement.
- I want to increase my self-confidence and self-esteem.
- I want to feel secure.
- I want to be a part of a purpose or a group of people.
- I want to use my skills and education.
- I want to be recognized and valued by others.
Ranking Interests

Rank in order from 1 (the most important) - 22 (the least important) the following job values:

Challenge: I want to solve problems on the job. ______________________

Competence: I want a job that I am able to do well. ______________________

Creativity: I want to use my own ideas. ______________________

Enjoyment: I want a job that is fun. ______________________

Environment: I want clean, healthy working conditions. ______________________

Fame: I want people to know about me and my work. ______________________

Independence: I want to work without close supervision. ______________________

Job Security: I want a steady job I can count on. ______________________

Knowledge: I want a job where I can learn new things. ______________________

Money: I want to earn more money. ______________________

People: I want to work with people. ______________________

Personal Satisfaction: I want to feel worthwhile. ______________________

Physical Mobility: I want to move around; not sit. ______________________

Power: I want to make decisions and be the boss. ______________________

Relationships: I want to know and like people at work. ______________________

Respect: I want people to look up to me. ______________________

Service to Others: I want to help others. ______________________

Social: I want to visit with people at work. ______________________

Solitude: I want to be by myself at work. ______________________

Time: I want a job with no overtime. ______________________

Understood Tasks: I want to be told what to do. ______________________

Variety: I want to do many different activities. ______________________
**What’s Your Ideal Job? What’s The Worst?**

Check out the help wanted section of a newspaper or go to a job search website and research what you would consider to be the best and worst job characteristics. Write your results in the areas to the right. Make sure to include details about:

- Length of vacation.
- Type of work environment.
- Small vs. big company.
- Work with people vs. things.
- Changing or stable work tasks.
- Skills needed to do the job.
- Amount of sick leave.
- Number of hours worked per day.
- Amount of money earned.
- Amount of status in the job.
- Advancement.
- Location.
- People you work with.
- Working indoors or outdoors.
- Amount of medical insurance.
- When you work: days, nights, swing shift.
- Amount of responsibility.
- Retirement age.
- Long-term security of job.

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Career Exploration

Investigate all the career choices, options, and opportunities of interest to you. You can research possible career fields through O*net (www.onetcenter.org) or The Occupational Outlook Handbook (www.bls.gov/oco) or NYCareerZone.org. These sites can help you to better understand the nature of careers, training involved, earnings, and job openings in the future. You can use the blanks below to help with your research.

Job Title: _______________________________

What are the skills needed/required?
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________

Is travel involved? ____________________________________________

What are the working conditions like?
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________

What is the needed certification/education to work in this field?
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________

What is the starting and average pay? __________________________

What are the typical hours per day/week? _______________________

Is the work mostly outdoors or indoors? _________________________

Is the work environment stable or constantly changing? _________

How often does career advancement take place in this industry?
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________

What is the industry outlook? (Is the industry growing or shrinking? Are they hiring or firing?)
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________

What appear to be the best/worst aspects of the job?
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________

Will you be mainly working as an individual or in groups?
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________

What were you surprised to learn about this career?
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________

And you thought figuring out what you wanted to do was hard, getting the job is harder...if you don’t prepare. Once you have found an industry that you are excited to pursue, consider acquiring experience in your field through:

**Informational Interviews** – Contact an employee in the field that you are interested in and ask if you can set up a time to ask them about their job. Most people are more than happy to talk about what they do. You can ‘cold call’ people, but you may find friends, family, college faculty & staff have connections to help. See below for information on what questions to ask.

**Job Shadows** – Ask someone in a career in which you are interested if you can follow him or her around during a “typical” work day so that you can experience what the job might be like.

**Internships** – Apply to work in a company that will give you a short-term job like an internship or summer job.

**Volunteer** – If getting experience in a particular field is extremely difficult, see if you can volunteer so you can start learning the necessary skills and building your experiences.

### What Questions Should I Ask in an Informational Interview?

Brainstorm questions you would like to know about the career, the person, the industry, or even the company. Write them down below or on a your own paper. Here are some possible questions. **But don’t just use these - make up your own!**

- What is a typical day like? What’s a really good day like? What’s a really bad day like?
- How do people move up in this career?
- What type of training or education is required?
- What advice would you give me if I wanted to get into this career?

Question #1 ____________________________________________________________

Question #2 ____________________________________________________________

Question #3 ____________________________________________________________

Question #4 ____________________________________________________________

Question #5 ____________________________________________________________
Throughout this brochure, you have learned that finding the right job involves looking at who you are, what you like, and what you can do. You may also have seen how personality influences how you function on the job and how you perceive your work. Hopefully, you also got some ideas about careers and a glimpse of your future. The next step is making goals. The most successful people write clear, measurable, and achievable goals.

Create 5 goals and what you need to do to accomplish them.

GOAL 1: ____________________________________________________________

I need to: __________________________________________________________

GOAL 2: ____________________________________________________________

I need to: __________________________________________________________

GOAL 3: ____________________________________________________________

I need to: __________________________________________________________

GOAL 4: ____________________________________________________________

I need to: __________________________________________________________

GOAL 5: ____________________________________________________________

I need to: __________________________________________________________

If you would like help or suggestions for goals and next steps, call the Career Services Office (315) 386-7119 and make an appointment to talk with a coach.

Do not worry if you have built your castles in the air. They are where they should be. Now put the foundations under them."

Henry David Thoreau
Mandala Mania!

People have been drawing and painting mandalas for centuries. They are visual exercises through which we focus and reflect on one topic and draw whatever comes to mind.

There are few rules: you can draw, write, paint any number of objects, symbols, representations, or completely abstract squiggles (see the examples). The point is to not think and just let images come from deep within you.

You can draw a mandala for any of the questions in this handout.