

An Innovative Approach to Career Counseling, Theory and Practical Application
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Marcy has over 30 years of career counseling experience at 4 Universities and weekly she hosts the podcast Wolfpack Career Chats. She teaches classes on Career Exploration and Women in the Workforce where she empowers others to reach their potential while offering creative solutions to career fulfillments.

I chose my career path after volunteering in my college career center at University of California at San Diego while studying sociology and communication as an undergraduate. I quickly realized that I never wanted to leave college and that I could devote my life to helping others figure out what to devote theirs to. This led me into completing a Master's of Science in Counseling. We spend one-third of our waking hours at work, and I wanted to impact the choices others make to ensure those hours are meaningful.

I moved to North Carolina where I have spent the majority of my career inspiring students to reach their potential. I enjoyed a sabbatical for six months visiting career centers in Australia, and I realized that no matter where you are on the globe, "Who am I now and who will I be when I grow up?" is a dominant question throughout one's life. I facilitate a process by which my career explorers identify a previous, current and future version of themselves.

In my job, I strive to provide transformative experiences to students. I believe that every human life is a canvas seeking inspiration to find their worth as they carve out their unique masterpiece. I lead teams and teach classes on career exploration, career readiness, practicing happiness, women in the workforce, and professional development at NC State University. Milestones in my career have been the Governor's Award for Excellence, the Outstanding Faculty Award from the alumni society, and being invited to speak nationally and internationally.

I have expertise in building trust in teams, careers, Gallup's CliftonStrengths, job search, building relationships, finding your purpose, achieving goals, professionalism, leadership, and values alignment. I encourage others to reach their full professional potential by enthusiastically sharing what I have learned. I have done it for thousands over my career at four Universities from Australia to California to North Carolina.

I created a mantra which embodies my personal philosophy for career exploration and I share it with my students.. "Be fully present and trust the

process as you explore your path releasing the pressure valve to unleash your potential.” I coined this phrase because it ties together successful strategies to deal with challenges I see career explorers facing. Students enrolled agree to embrace my P5 Mantra and course evaluations prove the positive impact as graduates report higher confidence about their career direction.

1. **BE FULLY PRESENT.** Students struggle to stay present in the moment. They are pulled by worry over what has already happened and fear of what may happen next. What if I make the wrong choice?, is echoed frequently. We intentionally turn off our devices to let go of the weight of the past while practicing mindfulness. We acknowledge our fears of the future and return to the present.
2. **TRUST THE PROCESS.** College students report high levels of anxiety during and after the pandemic.. The process of choosing a future goal can be paralyzing. Leaning in with trust can free up the permission to be vulnerable and explore without boundaries. Students learn to align their actions with top values they have identified. Alumni stories of overcoming obstacles prove to be reassuring.
3. **EXPLORE YOUR PATH.** The path ahead looks foggy early on, but the career counseling activities lead to expanded self knowledge and thoughtful decisions While the FOCUS 2 (www.focus2career.com) assessment provides concrete examples of career paths that match a student’s interests, values, personality and skills it is not a panacea, and I refer to the decade of your twenties as being “The trying 20s” It feels trying while you try lots of things. We learn to embrace the uncertainty. Students report the relief that they are not alone as they work together to leave their comfort zone.
4. **RELEASE THE PRESSURE VALVE.** The pressure to make “the right” decision causes stress and leads to mental health struggles which is why we practice breathwork, proven to activate the parasympathetic nervous system and lower the heart rate of a frequent [flight/flight/freeze response](#). Students compare themselves to others which causes insecurities. We release this tendency and learn that we can admire others without questioning ourselves. We embrace our journey just as there are many beautiful flowers in a field that are all unique, one is not better than another.
5. **UNLEASH YOUR POTENTIAL.** I believe every human has enormous potential and I have seen that we often hold ourselves back with doubt and we are our worst enemy. There is a 1 in 300 trillion chance each of us would be here. Taking a career exploration class reminds us that we have a reason for being here and provides the power to unleash what is inside of us.

The magic of a group of like minded people striving together to unlock their potential while embracing the P5 philosophy is inspiring.

The people best suited for this work are the ones who share a connection to the P5 mantra and have a caring mindset and a desire to continually learn. After receiving recent offers to leave, I revisited my values, which include having a creative license to design new ways to support both struggling and thriving students. The pandemic forced me to take my pulse and connect to fulfilling experiences because nothing is guaranteed. When a student I impacted later shares how they grew from my counsel and how it helped them to succeed, it reminds me that this is where I am supposed to be.

Professional Ethics in Practice

An ethics issue that I see more of somewhat recently is reneging on a job offer after accepting it earlier. The ethical code of conduct from the National Association of Colleges and Employers advises that job applicants accept one job offer and then cease interviewing. I have observed Generation Z morally challenged by this dilemma. They sometimes want to continue interviewing after accepting an offer just in case something better arises, but they don't want the hiring manager to continue seeking applicants for the job they accepted. Enter me and my ethics lesson.

Technology in Career Services

Technology has revolutionized my work, and there is simply nothing I do now in my career that I did a pandemic ago. I host virtual career fairs and on-line learning systems. I use Symplicity, Moodle, Zoom, and SoundCloud for my podcast, which has over 250 episodes and over 50K downloads. The pandemic forced me to offer services asynchronously and create new digital content.

I have added yoga breaks in my online class and I begin with mindful meditation. I give students active learning challenges instead of lectures. In career counseling sessions, I walk and talk outside allowing students the freedom to be vulnerable and talk about the issues underneath the resume critique, such as imposter syndrome and a paralyzing fear of the future.

Zoom counseling sessions are convenient and have a place in my work but do not offer the same success outcomes. During the pandemic I began hosting events like "Puppies and Pizza" where the only outcome sought is stress relief. Technology offers new frontiers but it does not replace face-to-face college community building and the need for human connection.

References-

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