



Career Choices and Mental Health Follow Your North Star

A career is a person's unique journey shaped by their educational and professional experiences over time. The average person spends nearly a third of their life working—a huge portion of life that deserves consideration. The question to ponder is whether a career is simply a means to earn a living that we approach with detachment or even tolerance, or if it's an exciting adventure of self-expression that we can look forward to with pleasure, curiosity, and a sense of accomplishment.

When we talk about mental health, we often focus on emotional upheavals, relationships, and personal lives. However, mental health is equally relevant in the context of academic and professional experiences. Just as a child's academic performance impacts their emotions and vice versa, an adult's career choices and experiences profoundly affect their mental well-being. Preventive action is as beneficial for mental health as it is for physical health, especially when it comes to career satisfaction. A primary cause of dissatisfaction is a poor person-job fit. Making informed career decisions can save a person from regretful choices that may feel difficult to reverse.

So, how can someone choose a career that truly fits them as an individual? Rather than following trends or friends blindly, consider your own path based on an awareness of: **Interests + Skills + Personality + The World of Work**

What Students Can Do to Help Themselves Make Informed Career Decisions:

- **Create a career journal:** Note down the experiences you enjoy most in both academic and non-academic activities.
- **Observe activities where you feel in a “flow” state:** These are moments when you are totally absorbed and lose track of time.
- **Research fields of interest:** Reading about different professions can broaden your understanding.
- **Seek hands-on experiences:** Job shadowing, internships, and immersion sessions are invaluable.
- **Identify the problems you enjoy solving:** This could be anything from fixing machines to resolving interpersonal conflicts or exploring geopolitical solutions.
- **Engage in diverse experiences:** Trying a variety of activities helps you understand your preferences and grow your personality.
- **Learn from mistakes:** Embrace the journey of self-exploration and move on.

What Parents Can Do to Facilitate Informed Career Decision-Making:

- **Encourage a positive attitude toward learning and school.**
- **Observe and nurture their interests:** Keep a record to track patterns over time.
- **Have age-appropriate conversations about various professions.**
- **Share your experiences:** Discuss your own career path with them.
- **Expose them to different workplaces:** This could be a grocery store, hospital, studio, court, bank, gym, etc.
- **Notice their natural skills:** Observe what they choose to do in their free time.
- **Stay updated on emerging career options.**
- **Talk about family members' professions and keep communication open with teachers.**
- **Avoid letting stereotypes shape their choices.**
- **Provide real choices and remain open-minded.**
- **Share neutral facts about careers rather than imposing personal opinions.**

Positive Impacts of Informed Career Decision-Making on Mental Health:

- Increased job satisfaction and happiness
- Enhanced self-esteem
- Stronger interpersonal relationships
- Better productivity
- Improved self-image
- Higher chances of excelling in a career rather than settling for mediocrity

Choosing a career is like selecting an ice cream flavour; we sample and decide to maximize enjoyment. Why, then, should we leave such a crucial life decision to chance? Just as we wouldn't expect a monkey to swim or a duck to climb a tree, we shouldn't pressure a budding artist or a future diplomat into a rat race for engineering or medicine. Let each individual's inner "north star" guide them to their true calling.

With best wishes,
Health & Wellness Department
Delhi Public School-Bopal, Ahmedabad