
1. Making Career Decisions

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Sample

Make Yourself Happy

Learning objectives

- ◆ Articulate your values and goals.
- ◆ Learn about different types of practice opportunities.
- ◆ Outline your key issues.

Whether you are just completing your residency or have been practicing for decades, career changes can provoke anxiety. There are so many factors to consider and so many decisions to make. Your goal is to make yourself happy, otherwise, why make a change at all? In this chapter, we will talk about outlining your key issues and learning about practice opportunities. Your objective is to learn about yourself and the types of practices that may be right for you.

***"Ain't no man can tell you what's right or wrong for you
'cause you got to know what you need to know to know what you got to do."***

You've Got to Walk It Like You Talk It or You'll Lose That Beat
Fagen, Becker, and Lock
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Confronted with career decisions, you may find that there is no shortage of free advice, from colleagues, friends, and relatives. You may feel pressured to make a particular choice to satisfy others' explicit or implicit expectations. While advice may be well intentioned and expectations may be real, you must be satisfied with where you live and the work you do. In short, make yourself happy.

Think about . . .

- ◆ *What is the difference between a job and a career?*

Some people see jobs and careers as differences of tenure: A job represents a short commitment, where a career is long term. Others see differences of money and motivation: You take a job to earn money; you pursue a career for fulfillment. For most of us, the differences between a job and a career are both simpler and more complex.

In a sense, our careers are a series of jobs. Our career thrives when our jobs meet our changing needs. At some points in our lives, a job that lasts a year or two might be just what we need. At other points, we might need decades of tenure. Some are fulfilled by a single job their entire career. Our jobs can change even when we do not change employers. We need to earn money at our job so we can support our families and ourselves. Most of us need more than money from our jobs; we need fulfillment. We need to make ourselves happy.

"Your path is your character"

"You pick up bits and pieces of treasure and trash, pain and pleasure, passions and disappointments, and you start throwing them in your bag, your big bag of experience. You do some dumb things that don't work out at all. You stumble excitedly on little gems that you never saw coming. And you stuff them all in your bag. You pursue the things you love and believe in. You cast off the images of yourself that don't fit. And suddenly you look behind you and a pattern emerges.

You look in front of you and the path makes sense. There is nothing more beautiful than finding your course as you believe you bob aimlessly in the current. Wouldn't you know that your path was there all along, waiting for you to knock, waiting for you to become. This path does not belong to your parents, your teachers, your leaders, your lovers. Your path is your character defining itself more and more every day, like a photograph coming into focus."

*Jodie Foster
Actor, director, and producer
Commencement address, 2006
University of Pennsylvania*

Follow Your Dream

"I find the great thing in this world is not so much where we stand, as in what direction we are moving: To reach the port of heaven we must sail with the wind and sometimes against it, but we must sail, and not drift, nor lie at anchor."

Oliver Wendell Holmes

My Great Day at Work

Think about . . .

- ◆ *Imagine that you are relaxing with friends at the end of your work day. With your favorite beverages, everyone is sharing their experiences during the day. You had a GREAT day. Describe three things that made it great:*

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

- ◆ *Now imagine the same scenario, except that you had a terrible day at work. Describe three things that made it terrible.*

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

When looking for the next job in your career, be aware of what might make your work day great and what might make it terrible. Follow the path that offers more of the former and less of the latter.

My Values and Goals

"If you don't know where you're going, you might wind up somewhere else."

Yogi Berra

Think about . . .

- ◆ *Self-knowledge is the key to making yourself happy. Get started finding the answers by completing the following phrases:*

"I like to . . . "

"I don't like to . . . "

"I'm good at . . . "

"I'm not good at . . . "

Professional and Personal Values and Goals

Professional achievement

- ▶ How much time do you want to spend in patient care, teaching, research, administration and other activities?
- ▶ Do you want to do a variety of things?
- ▶ What is your approach to patient care?
- ▶ What are your career objectives and goals?

Practice setting

- ▶ Do you prefer a large institution?
- ▶ A large medical group?
- ▶ Single specialty or multispecialty?
- ▶ A community health center?
- ▶ A small private practice?
- ▶ Something else?

Control

- ▶ How much control do you want over your professional and personal activities, such as clinical protocols, and working hours.
- ▶ Are you comfortable with institutional protocols, rules, and regulations?
- ▶ Would you prefer being your own boss?

Time

- ▶ How much time do you want to spend working?
- ▶ How much time off do you want?
- ▶ How would you like to allocate your time among different professional and personal activities?

Family and friends

- ▶ What kind of spouse and parent do you want to be?
- ▶ Is it important to live near your extended family and friends?

Community

- ▶ Where do you want to live?
- ▶ Do you prefer a certain region or community size?
- ▶ How involved would you like to become in community affairs?

Standard of living

- ▶ How much money do you want to make?