

NURTURING THE GIFT WITHIN: PERSONALITY INFLUENCING CAREER CHOICE

Student: Miss Duff, we problem solved!

Teacher: Good. What did you do?

Student: Well John was making fun of Mary, and Mary didn't like it, so I said "that's their personality and not your personality, so you don't have to be like them or do what they do".

Teacher: Wow, you said that?

Student: Yup, that's not her personality and she doesn't have to be like they are, she could just walk away.

This student said it right!

Each of us have our own unique personality that makes us who we are. Personality can be defined as “a person's distinctive and [consistent] pattern of thinking, feeling, and behaving,”¹ which stems from a mix of biological and environmental influences.

Now, the idea of personality is not a new one. Between our day-to-day conversations, work/school life, or simply taking a personality test – we encounter various personalities on any given day. Most, if not all, people have a general understanding what personality is.

Personality is...

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PERSONALITY AND CAREER CHOICE

Choosing a career is one of the most important decisions a student can make in their academic career, and it requires careful consideration. Now you may be thinking, what does personality have to do with choosing a career?

By the age of 3 or younger, a child's personality has already begun to develop and through interaction with their environment their characteristics become cemented. This is not to say that an "extraverted person is boisterous and jolly all the time...nor does it mean people cannot change." ²

It simply means that personality is consistent.



According to a Canadian survey of 80,574 students in 87 colleges, it concluded that "good grades are related to having a major close to one's personality."³ With that being said, it's important that students chose a major that is an extension of their own interest and skill sets.

Sadly, students are "making choices independently or based on the opinions of those with whom they have a personal relationship, such as family members, and students will most likely make an uneducated, unrelated, and ineffective decision not based on personal goals, interest or values."⁴

Parents have high hopes for their children, as they should, but often parents choose, or highly influence, their child's career choice and academic decisions. Become a lawyer or doctor they may say, but that is of no interest to their child.

"Choosing a major should be an intentional choice based on knowledge of one's self."⁵ But if the student is unaware of who they are and lacks support and guidance,

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Should they be choosing a career and enrolling in a major?

Going back to the three-year-old whose personality is beginning to form, this is an opportune time for parents to begin to identify characteristics in their child.



How do they interact with other children?

What is their temperament?

What are their interests?

As they begin to mature, families and community members can begin to identify the consistencies in behaviour and areas of interests as this will help determine what the child is naturally good at and what careers would be the best fit.

Are they good with their hands?

Do they analyze every situation?

Do they tend to think outside the box?

Do they learn very quickly?

Do they enjoy solving problems?

Do they have special skills or talents that surprise you or seem 'uncommon'?



Some may argue that thinking about what your child will become at such a young age is unrealistic. But is it? If personality traits are consistent, it's likely that your 6-year-old child will exhibit those same traits at 16.

COUNT YOUR PENNIES

Let's dig a little deeper.

Did you know that approximately 20% to 50% of students enter post-secondary as "undecided" and 75% of students change their major at least once before graduation? ⁶ These figures are costly! The average undergraduate degree in Canada is \$6,580. For four years that total rises to \$26, 320, excluding additional costs.⁷



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So it's in the best interest of the parent and their child to begin this process early through intentional observations. Observations are not limited to parents only, this includes aunties, uncles, teachers, godparents and so on.

This may lead to less anxiety and pressure around career choices during high school, as well as saving families an extra 1 or 2 years of additional tuition costs through program changes.

UNDECIDED (UNDECLARED) MAJOR:

an option students can chose when entering a post secondary institution if they have not yet decided on a program in which to pursue.

YOUR ROLE

It's no secret that parents play a crucial role in the overall development of their children. As mentioned earlier in this article, parents can notice behaviours very early. The question is what do you do when you notice these behaviours?

During the early stages of discovery, it is important to:

1. Applaud and motivate your child as this will increase confidence and self-esteem
2. Get personally interested in the activities they are engaged in.
3. Pay attention and see what holds your child's attention.
4. Provide different play materials and see what they consistently lean towards.⁸

"Parents can provide opportunities for exploring talents outside of school, support interests and hobbies, discuss and respect their child's ideas, encourage a love of learning by not placing restrictions on what they view as important to learn."⁹

To summarize, instead of cramming for a career choice in the few years of high school, parents can help students notice their consistent personality traits earlier and be a support to them on their journey to a fulfilling career choice that's best suited for them.

TRAILBLAZERS



OPRAH:

Oprah is an American talk show host, television producer, actress, author, and philanthropist.

"Winfrey's career in media would not have surprised her grandmother, who once said that ever since Winfrey could talk, she was on stage. As a child, she played games interviewing her corn cob doll and the crows on the fence of her family's property. Winfrey later acknowledged her grandmother's influence, saying it was Hattie Mae who had encouraged her to speak in public and "gave me a positive sense of myself".¹⁰



BEYONCE:

Beyonce is a songwriter, singer, and actress.

Darlette Johnson, Beyonce's dance instructor, noticed her singing talent when she hummed a song and Beyonce finished it - hitting the high notes. Beyoncé's interest in music and performing continued after winning a school talent show at age seven, singing John Lennon's "Imagine." When Beyonce was 8, she joined a group called Girl's Tyme which later changed to Destiny's Child in 1996 and was managed by Mathew Knowles, Beyonce's father.



MAE C. JEMISON:

Mae is an engineer, physician, and former astronaut.

As a young girl she had a love for science, dance and going into space, even though she hadn't seen anyone that looked like her do so. Her parents were supportive of her love for science. After the Apollo Mission, Jemison thought, why were there no women astronauts? She fulfilled her dream and went into space in 1992.



SERENA WILLIAMS:

Serena is a professional tennis player.

Serena started playing tennis at the age of three with her father and at the age of 14 began to play professionally. She has "revolutionized women's tennis with her powerful style of play and who won more Grand Slam singles titles (23) than any other woman or man during the open era".¹¹

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