

10 CAREER DECISIONMAKING SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

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(prioritize the items highlighted in yellow)

Questions to identify patterns from your past experiences

1. *When thinking about accomplishments that you enjoyed achieving the most, what patterns do you see? (Seven Stories in-depth exercise)* Come up with a few of your best anecdotes: accomplishments from work, education, or personal life that you're most proud of and brought you the greatest sense of enjoyment/satisfaction while you were achieving them. Then analyze those to identify patterns. For example, one client noticed that almost all of the examples she chose contained the same two elements: persuading others and being innovative. She realized that when she didn't have these elements in her work, she was less satisfied, so she weighted these two elements heavily when deciding on her next career move.
2. *Do certain work situations consistently cause feelings of unhappiness, anxiety, resentment or frustration?* Look back at your prior roles to see if there's a pattern. If so, you may need to either a) fix yourself first before you can even know whether changing jobs will make you feel better, or b) find a job or career where that trigger won't be present. As the saying goes, "Wherever you go, there you are." For example, one client realized that he had never been happy in any of his five jobs because in each role he felt that he was being treated unfairly. This was a big moment of clarity for him; he saw that prospective new jobs would not leave him feeling more satisfied unless he first changed his expectations regarding relationships with his colleagues.
3. *When (if ever) were you happy in your career? What work (if any) did you truly enjoy? Why?* With one of my clients, we had to go back 15 years to find a role that she enjoyed. Answering this question helped her to see the source of her dissatisfaction: that the market dynamics of her industry had permanently changed for the worse over the years. She decided to change industries while keeping the same job title. The result – she regained the sense of purpose and contentment she had missed for so long.

Questions to identify unique problems with your current situation

1. *What are your key work-related values, those on which you really don't want to compromise? (Work-related Values exercise)* Examples could be compensation, believe in mission, authority, time for family, short commute, enjoyable colleagues and so on.
2. *If you're feeling stuck, would "better" work colleagues make a difference?* For many of my clients, a poor relationship with a boss or colleague, or a feeling of being taken for granted, was the cause of dissatisfaction. In some cases [those relationships could be improved](#). In others, changing jobs while staying on the same career track was the solution.

3. *Does your work feel purposeful, meaningful, or important?* If not, what can you do that would give you a sense of purpose? A lot of research has shown that [purpose and meaning are key drivers of life satisfaction](#).
4. *If you know what's holding you back but fear taking action, how reality-based is this fear?* Ask yourself 1) What's the worst-case outcome from taking action (being destitute, losing your home, losing your family, etc.)? 2) How truly likely is that worst case outcome? 3) What's the worst-case outcome for NOT taking action? 4) Is there a way to mitigate a well-founded fear of taking action? Once you answer these questions, the path forward may present itself. Sometimes that path isn't a straight one. For example, one client feared losing income. To address this fear, he developed a two-year plan which included keeping his current dead-end job, enrolling in a six-month evening certification course and taking on consulting work part time to build experience in a new area. Yes, the path was a hard one; he had to work many more hours than he otherwise would prefer. But when he was able to switch into his dream career two years later, it all became worth it.

Questions to help you envision a better future

8. *What regrets might you have in 20 years if you do/don't make a move?* [When Jeff Bezos did this exercise](#), he realized he would always regret not quitting his lucrative investment banking job to take a chance on starting his own company. The rest is history.
9. *What's your vision for your life? (Vision exercise)* What do you want your life to feel like five years from now? 15 years from now? Make sure that the career path you choose will help you reach that vision.
10. *What career decision-making criteria can you develop from the prior nine questions? (Decision-making exercise)* List the criteria in columns on a piece of paper or spreadsheet. Then brainstorm job or career options and place them in the rows. Score each row based on how well they fit the decision-making-criteria in the columns.