



CAREER EXPLORATION

LESSON PLANS & ACTIVITIES

TOPIC: MEANINGFUL WORK

Learning Objectives

- Help students explore what it means to engage in meaningful work, and how to achieve a fulfilling career.
- Engage students in reflection regarding the type of career they want to have, and how that career will contribute to their “Full Life.”
- Expose students to narratives from people whose careers are an active part of their “Full Life.”
- Cover various topics you think would be most beneficial to your students in helping them on their path to a meaningful career.

Core Concepts

Dysfunctional Belief: "We judge our life by the outcome."

Reframe: "Life is a process, not an outcome."

Instructor Resources

- Career Fantasy Exercise
- Journal and/or discussion questions for Career Fantasy Exercise
- Oprah’s Po Bronson Interview: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cuPvGgvgebU>
- Meaningful Work Venn Diagram (see Student Handouts)
- Meaningful Work Packet: <https://missouri.app.box.com/file/511982061379>

Suggested Agenda

- Discuss the importance of having a meaningful career.
- Have students complete Journal Prompt
- Have students complete the Meaningful Work Packet
- Select one of the possible activities below

Possible Activities

- **Discuss the components of a meaningful career:**
 - Human beings appear to have a need to transform themselves and the world around them while making progress toward important end states.
“Meaningful work” characteristics have been shown to be positively correlated with total engagement, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment.

- Meaningful work is closely tied to one's sense of self and identity.
- Meaningful work has been defined as work that allows expression of imagination, ingenuity, and creativity; achievement of purpose, values, and goals; social impact; and self-actualization (realizing one's full potential through work).
 - *Source- Gallup Report Link: <https://missouri.app.box.com/file/446091496800>
- **Watch video/Class Discussion:** A good example can be found in Oprah's interview with Po Bronson <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cuPvGgvgebU>. He talks about his career path and sense of purpose. Have students watch the video and then discuss what they heard and their reactions.
 - Based on the career narrative(s) you just watched, can you identify any themes? Compare your own story to the one from the video.
 - How did the person in the video take a risk to follow his or her dream? Is this reasonable? What risks are you willing to take?
 - In the video, the person started on one career path and then made a dramatic shift. What does this tell you about the nature of career paths? Think of other examples from your own life.
 - Is there another aspect of the video that affected you? Discuss what you learned. What would the next chapter of your narrative be? Why?
- **Stage a debate:** Have students argue which of the following positions is "better": a job with a great salary, a job that you excel at, or a job that makes you excited. Have them try to convince the other groups that their view is best!
- **Career Fantasy Exercise:** Ask students to clear off their desks and remove any distractions. Have them quiet down and close their eyes. Indicate this is a time to let their minds wander. Lead them through the following script so they can begin imagining their future and the possibilities before them.

Script:

"Imagine yourself 10 years from now...."

- *You wake up...Are you in an apartment? A house?*
- *As you head to the bathroom what do you hear? Birds? Traffic?*
- *You go into the kitchen, make coffee, eat breakfast. Who's with you? Another person? A pet?*
- *You look out the window... where are you? In the suburbs? The city? The country? What's the weather like? What's the landscape like? Mountains? Desert? Ocean?*
- *You shower and get dressed for your day. What do you wear? Do you put on a suit? Tennis shoes?*
- *You leave for your day...Are you going to a job? What time is it when you leave? How do you get there? Perhaps the subway, a car, a cab, maybe you walk? How long does it take you to get to work?*
- *You get to where you're going. Are you outside or inside? If inside, is it an office building? A school? What kind of building is it?*
- *When you get to work, what do you do right away? Do you go to an office? A cubicle? A meeting? Are you at a computer? Are you on the phone? What kind of work are you doing?*
- *Time for lunch: Where do you go? Do you leave your work? Do you eat while you work? Do you eat lunch alone or with other people?*

- *Time to leave work... what time is it? 5:00 exactly? Earlier? Later?*
- *Where do you go right after work? Straight home? Somewhere else first?*
- *When you get home, is there someone there? What's the first thing you do when you get home?*
- *It's dinner time... Do you go somewhere? Do you cook? If so, are you cooking just for you or for anyone else?*
- *What do you do after dinner? Do you have to do more work? Grade papers? Read? Do you relax? Do you go out somewhere?*
- *What else do you do before bed? Anything else? What time do you go to bed?*

When you're ready bring your thoughts back to the present moment and open your eyes as our exercise comes to a close."

Career Fantasy Follow Up Journal or Discussion Questions:

Take students through the main parts of the day and discuss their answers:

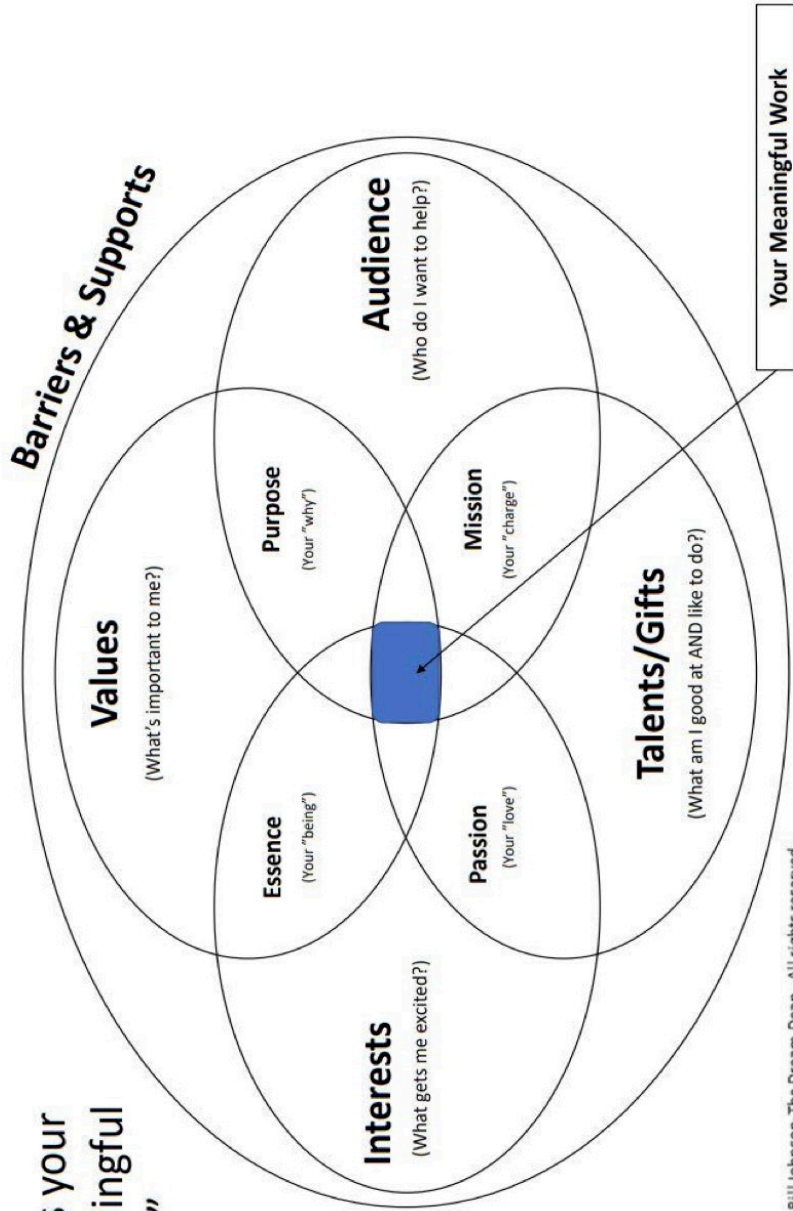
- 1) Anything surprising? Was it like you expected? Not what you expected?
- 2) Did it seem permanent or was this a temporary scenario?
- 3) Is this consistent with any of the occupations you've thought about before?
- 4) Did you imagine a specific occupation for yourself?
- 5) Why did we do this exercise?

Discussion Questions

- What might meaningful work or a fulfilling career look like for you?
- Think of someone you know who enjoys their work/job and finds their work fulfilling. Who is this person? How do you know they find their job fulfilling? What are some things you could learn from this person?
- Is it necessary to choose a career based on the things you are passionate about? Why or why not? How do your passions and possible career path relate?

Name: _____

What's your "Meaningful Work?"



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Meaningful Work Statement

MEANINGFUL WORK STATEMENT

Meaningful Work Statement

What if you could be clear about the work that you're here to do? What if that work was connected to your values, your talents and gifts, and your interests? The Meaningful Work Model was developed to provide a framework to develop the "work" you are here to do, the gifts that you will share with the world, and the positive contribution you will make in serving others – all of which empowers you to become a better person. Use this activity whenever you are at a crossroads in your life and want to explore the "work" you'd like to do.

Values – Choose top 5

Your Values are the things that are most important things in your life right now. You will identify your top five values, the five most important things in your life right now. As you narrow down your list to five, it will be useful to also rank order your list, where you determine the most important (#1) value, second most important value, all the way down to the fifth most important value. Write your rank-ordered top five list on the Meaningful Work Statement Worksheet.

Accomplishment
Accountability
Advancement
Authority
Autonomy
Balance/Stability
Challenge/Risk
Competence
Competition
Creativity
Diversity
Education
Enjoyment
Entrepreneurship
Environment
Excellence
Expertise
Fairness
Fame

Family
Friendship
Harmony
Health
Helping Others
Honesty
Innovation
Integrity
Knowledge
Learning
Leadership
Leisure
Loyalty
Nature
Personal Development
Power
Recognition
Religion
Respect

Responsibility
Safety
Service
Security
Spirituality
Travel
Trust
Wealth
Wisdom

MU CAREER CENTER
Lower Level,
Student Success Center

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 career.missouri.edu
 career@missouri.edu

Talents and Gifts – Choose up to 5

This part of the meaningful work activity will have you identify your talents and gifts. These are the things that you are both good at AND you enjoy doing. Circle, highlight, or place a check next to all that apply to you, then narrow down your list up to five (5) that fit you best. Make sure you choose only those things that you're both good at doing AND that you like to do! Note: If something is not listed below, feel free to add it to your list! Write your top five list on the Meaningful Work Statement Worksheet.

Adapting
Analyzing data
Appreciating things
Arranging
Asking good questions
Being adventurous
Being fair
Being funny
Being optimistic
Bringing out best in others
Building things
Buying
Caring for others
Cleaning
Collecting
Coming up with new ideas
Compiling statistics
Connecting people
Cooking
Coordinating activities
Counseling
Creating new things
Dealing with pressure
Dealing with relationships
Debating
Decorating
Demonstrating
Designing
Developing
Driving
Eating healthy
Encouraging people
Enhancing beauty
Entertaining others
Exercising
Fixing things
Future-thinking
Gathering information

Giving advice
Giving people hope
Giving presentations
Having conversations
Having fun
Healing
Helping/serving others
Implementing
Including others
Inspiring others
Learning from mistakes
Learning new things
Leading others
Listening
Living in the moment
Making arts and crafts
Making decisions
Making foods/drinks
Making music
Making people happy
Making people laugh
Managing money
Managing people
Managing time
Meeting people
Memorizing
Motivating others
Moving
Networking
Note-taking
Organizing
Painting/Drawing
Parenting
Performing
Planning events
Playing instruments
Playing games
Playing sports

Programming
Public speaking
Reading
Recruiting others
Reflecting
Remembering things
Repairing things
Reporting
Researching
Resolving problems
Saving lives
Selling/Marketing
Showing compassion
Singing
Speaking languages
Spending wisely
Starting new things
Storytelling
Taking care of people
Taking pictures
Taking risks
Talking
Teaching/Training
Thinking
Traveling
Understanding law/legal issues
Using computers
Using electronics
Using technology
Working on cars
Working outdoors
Working with numbers
Working with tools
Working with your hands
Writing

Interests – Choose up to 5

Your interests are the things that you're interested in, areas you're curious about, things that you're passionate about, problems you'd like to solve, and things that make you angry or drive you crazy. You may also use this as an opportunity to think about areas you'd like to learn more about. For this part of the exercise, choose up to five interests. Note: If there are areas that are not listed that you're interested in, add them to your list. Write your top five list on the Meaningful Work Statement Worksheet.

Government/Politics
Business
Entrepreneurship
Farming/Agriculture
History
Medicine/Medical Care
Toys/Games
Clothing/Fashion
Writing/Publishing
Beauty
Languages
Hotels/Event Planning
Cars/Driving
Safety/Security
Entertainment
Electronics
Education
Computers/Technology
Diversity
Transportation
Mental/Emotional Health

Sports/Athletics
Children Issues
Home Improvement
Dance
Nutrition/Food
Religion/Spiritual
Energy
Music/Radio
Housing/Real Estate
Law/Justice
Military
Math/Statistics
Animals/Pets
Families/Relationships
Landscape
Design
Exercise/Fitness
Theater/Acting
Disabilities
Aviation/Flying
Plants/Flowers

Environment/Nature
Marketing/Sales
Self-Help/Personal Growth
Humor
Furniture/Antiques
Social Media
Money/Finance
Books/Libraries
Cooking
Philanthropy
Recreation/Outdoors
Forensics/Death/Mortician
Boating/Water
Health/Wellness
Sexuality
Travel/Tourism
Television/Movies/Film
Photography
Arts/Crafts
Weather
Sciences

Audience – Choose up to 5

Your audiences are the people/groups you'd like to help, those you could see yourself working with, and/or those individuals/groups that could be benefiting from what you could share. For this part of the exercise, choose up to five audiences. Note: If there are people/groups that are not listed that you'd like to be involved with, add them to your list. Write your top five list on the Meaningful Work Statement Worksheet.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Business Owners | Single Parents |
| Entrepreneurs | Delinquents |
| Athletes | People in Emotional Crisis |
| Young Children | Elderly/Seniors |
| Communities/Neighborhoods | Females/Males |
| Deaf/Hearing Impaired | At-Risk Groups |
| Special Needs – Mental | Gangs/Gang Members |
| Special Needs - Physical | Homeless People |
| Disaster Victims | Farmers |
| High School Students | Entertainers/Celebrities |
| Infants/Babies | Children in Foster Care |
| College Students | Animals |
| Creative People | Pregnant Teens/Adults |
| Blind/Visually Impaired | Unhealthy People |
| High Level Executives | Orphans/Runaways |
| K-12 Education (Teachers, Staff) | Physically Abused |
| Families (includes your own) | Artists/Performers |
| Higher Education | Prisoners |
| Specific Medical Issues | Immigrants |
| Specific Ethnic/Racial Groups | Veterans/Military |
| Substance Abusers | Marriages |
| Poverty/Rural Areas | Single People |
| “Do-It-Yourself” (DIY) People | Adults |
| Religious Organizations | LGBTQA (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual,
Transgender, Questioning, Asexual) |
| Mothers and/or Fathers | |
| People from Other Countries | |

Action – Choose up to 5

Action words describe what you will do to help others, the process of how you will provide your help, or how you interact with others. Your action words may also describe what you the action that your audience will take when working with you. Action words describe action, to DO SOMETHING! As you choose your action words, think about the connection between your action words and your values, talents and gifts, interests, and audience. For this part of the exercise, choose up to five action words. Note: If there are action words that are not listed that you'd like to include, add them to your list. Write your top five list on the Meaningful Work Statement Worksheet.

Advise	Feed	Study
Advocate	Foster	Support
Assist	Free	Surrender
Build	Freedom	Teach
Change	Gather	Train
Coach	Guide	Transform
Collaborate	Heal	Unlock
Connect	Help	Uplift
Construct	Imagine	Worship
Contribute	Improve	
Coordinate	Influence	
Counsel	Inform	
Create	Inspire	
Cultivate	Instruct	
Deliver	Invite	
Demonstrate	Lead	
Design	Lift	
Develop	Listen	
Direct	Live	
Discover	Love	
Dream	Make	
Educate	Mentor	
Eliminate	Motivate	
Employ	Nurture	
Empower	Optimize	
Enable	Prepare	
Encourage	Promise	
Engage	Promote	
Enlist	Provide	
Entertain	Pursue	
Evaluate	Reclaim	
Examine	Rejuvenate	
Explain	Restore	
Explore	Savor	
Express	Share	
Facilitate	Show	

Impact/Change – One or two phrases

And for this last part, take a few minutes to write one or two phrases in the space below that briefly describes the impact you believe you will make, the changes that will occur for the people/groups you serve, the benefit others will have from your work, and/or how the lives of your audience will improve as a result of your help. Use the space below to jot a few ideas for your phrase(s); write your final phrase (or two) on the Meaningful Work Statement Worksheet.

You will use your results from the Values, Talents and Gifts, Interests, Audiences, and Action categories, as well as your Impact/Change phrase, to develop your Meaningful Work Statement.

Meaningful Work Statement

After you've come up with your list of “words” from the various activities, it's time to come up with ONE sentence that sums up your Meaningful Work – the work you'd like to do, who you'd like to help, how you'd help them, and the impact you will have and/or the change that will occur. Your meaningful work statement is a declaration that defines your contribution, your positive impact on others, and how your work will make you a better person. You may also decide to create multiple statements, especially if you have multiple interests and/or multiple audiences. Multiple statements may provide you an opportunity to select one statement to start with right away or find ways to combine/connect multiple statements into one. Remember to limit your statement to just ONE sentence to make this process easy for you. Below are several templates that may help you construct your statement; feel free to modify as you see fit – or combine statements that suit your needs. The best way to start this activity is to take your first choice of words in each category (talents, and gifts, interests, audience, and action) and see if you can come up with statement to start with, then modify accordingly. As you construct your meaningful work statement, keep these three questions in mind:

- What do I do?
- Who do I help?
- Why does it matter?

Meaningful Work Statement Worksheet

Meaningful Work Statement Sample Templates - fill in the blanks with at least one choice from each of the areas listed above. (Feel free to choose one or both templates below)

- Because I value _____ (**value**) and have an interest in _____ (**interest**), I will use my _____ (**talents and gifts**) to _____ (**action**) _____ (**audience**) so that _____ (**impact/change**).
- My meaningful work is to use my skills in _____ (**talents and gifts**) to _____ (**action**) _____ (**audience**) so that _____ (**impact/change**), because I value _____ (**value**) and have an interest in _____ (**interests**).

Meaningful Work Statement Sample Open-ended Sentence Starters (Note: If you use one of the open ended starters, you'll need to make sure to incorporate at least one item from each of the six items from the worksheet above):

- I am here to...
- I will serve others (or serve the world) by...

Bill's Example:

- "I am here to empower students, faculty, and staff in higher education through teaching and facilitating workshops/trainings to be introspective, using creativity, reflection, connection, and play to recognize their unique purpose, become self-experts, and create meaningful experiences to become the best version of themselves."

Use the space below (or a separate sheet of paper) to come up with your final statement. Feel free to construct multiple statements if you have multiple interests, multiple audiences you wish to serve, etc.

Potential Meaningful Work Statement Checkup

As you try to decide on the ONE Meaningful Work Statements, here's a way to test whether this statement is aligned with your values, talents and gifts, interests, audience, and impact/change. Use the questions and the scale below to determine the right meaningful work statement for you:

3 = a lot 2 = some 1 = a little 0 = none

1. How much is this meaningful work tied to my personal core values and/or desired work values? _____
2. How much would I be able to include my talents and gifts in doing this meaningful work?

3. How much is my interest(s) tied to this meaningful work? _____
4. How much empathy do I have for this particular audience if involved in this meaningful work?

5. How much of an impact/change will I really be able to make doing this meaningful work?

The highest score you could obtain is 15 (higher is better); you would want to at least score a "10" to consider this your meaningful work. If your score is not a "10" or more, what change in your statement (a change that resonates with you) would you have to make to get your score to a "10?" Does your statement need to be more aligned with your values? Do you need to take more advantage of your talents and gifts? Do you need to work with an audience where you can have a greater impact?

Action items:

Identify five (5) ideas about how you take the next step in approaching meaningful work for yourself?

Identify one (1) item you can begin taking action on within the next semester here at Mizzou?

Lesson adapted from Bill Johnson, Life Design (<http://lifedesigncatalyst.wordpress.com/presentations/>)