

From Postdoc to ___?

Figuring out Your Values and Priorities

Thanks for joining me for the workshop earlier this week! Here are a few resources you can use to help you reflect on what's important to you and learn about different jobs and careers.

Self-Reflection Exercises

Ask yourself:

“What are my top values?”

“What's most important to me?”

“When have I felt most energized?”

“What am I doing when time flies?”

“What did I choose to do in grad school – or do I do in my postdoc – that my peers didn't? What does that say about me?”

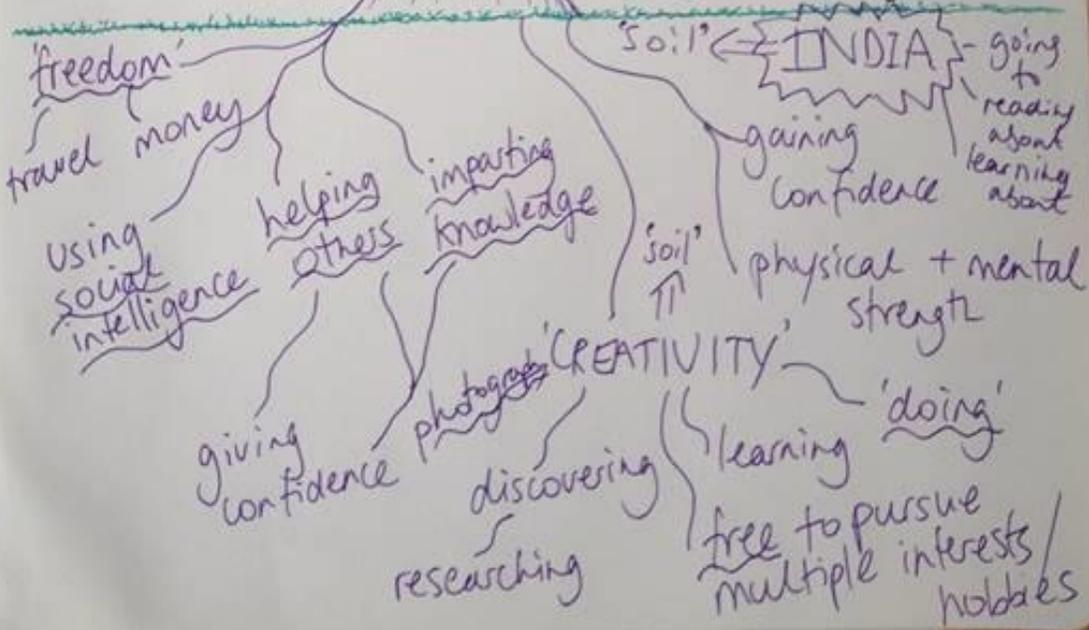
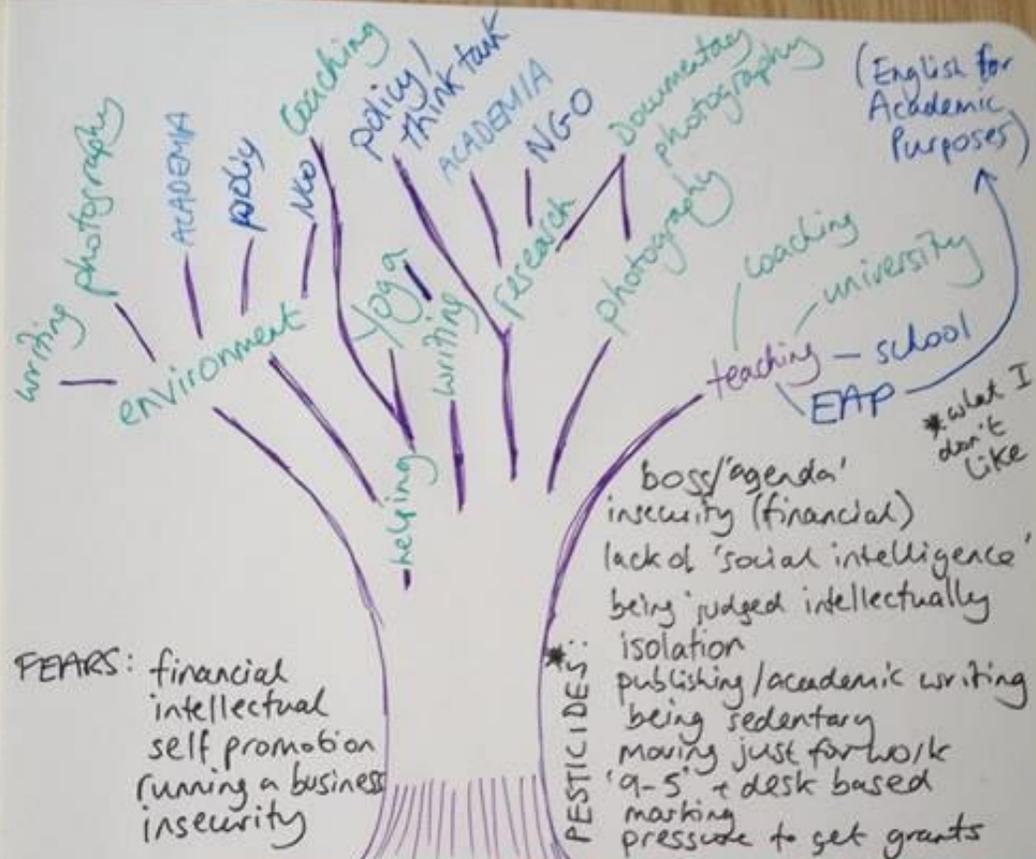
7 Stories Exercise

Adapted from *What Color Is Your Parachute?* Think about times when you've felt really energized. Write out stories – what did you do, who were you with, what was the context, what you did achieve, etc. Two-three paragraphs to a page is enough. Then compare the stories. What's the same across all or most of them?

Roots and Branches Exercise

Separate out your values, priorities, core strengths, abstract interests, and other lifestyle desires – those are the “roots.” Then reflect and research possible “branches”: different ways you can get at the life and career you want. Remember that there's no one [dream job](#).

On the next page, a client of mine drew her tree – roots and branches.



Self-Assessments

No test is going to tell you everything about yourself or suggest exactly the correct job for you, but assessments – taken for what they are – can provide you with new insights and get you thinking about different ways to apply your skills.

[VIA Survey of Character Strengths](#) (free, 10-15 minutes to do)

Not directly related to work and careers; instead, can get you thinking about what's important to you and how you best show up in the world.

[StrengthsFinder 2.0](#) (US \$10 for assessment or read the book)

Strengths here refer to workplace skill areas. Gives you great language to talk about what you do, which is crucial if you're moving into non-academic work.

[myIDP](#) (free tool for STEM PhDs)

A structured approach to exploring possible suitable careers.

There are plenty of other tools available online and from other sources. Have fun with this.

Where do PhDs Work?

[Transition Q&As](#) (blog series)

60+ transition stories from PhDs in a wide variety of fields. Scroll down for even more content.

[PhDs at Work](#)

Michelle Erickson's website features PhDs who are settled into a new career. She has them blog their work weeks.

There are tons of other sites, articles, and blog posts – not to mention podcasts, books, etc. – that feature information about career transition for PhDs. Check out my [Resources page](#) for a few more suggestions.



Jennifer Polk helps PhDs launch meaningful careers, during and after graduate school. Jen speaks and writes on issues related to graduate education and career outcomes for doctoral-degree holders. Find her online at [FromPhDtoLife.com](#), and at her award-winning *University Affairs* [blog](#). Jen earned her PhD from the University of Toronto.

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