



## CAREERS & OCCUPATIONS

### WHAT'S YOUR PLAN?

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In Career coaching, I've learned a model that helps the client to understand their vision and personal priorities along with their strengths and gifts, put together a plan and make it happen. Which makes sense, right? Figure out what you really want from life, and go get it? This is what I was taught, and I have found it to be very effective with many clients.

That's all very well, but what if you're having trouble with this approach? A single vision – how does that work if you have many gifts and interests? Priorities, yes – but what if they are not logical? How do you balance logic with the things that really matter to you? And then the plan – what if everything shifts around you and the plan turns out to be the worst possible direction, or there is just no way to make it work?

I also see here an iNtuitive/Judging kind of approach, which makes me wonder if it's the right way forward for *everyone* including those who don't naturally hold those preferences. The whole planning approach is very like a Judging preference, and while Perceiving types are often told what they should learn from planners, this is a look at the other side of that coin as well as a couple of others.

Practical or Imaginative?

I've found my Sensing-preferring clients really struggle with thinking outside the confines of what is familiar. They know what I mean, and they try – and can do it too! – but are often repeatedly distracted by what they've already done in the past. Not that it's not valid, but if you are trying to open up the options (as with brainstorming) you need to look beyond what is familiar or you will miss all kinds of possibilities which *still* use your skills, strengths and experience but not quite the way you've done it in the past.

And yet, on the other hand, preferring Intuition can mean having so many ideas you're stuck,

drowning in your myriad options. Getting all those ideas out there (as with brainstorming) is a key first step, and then the ideas can be sifted more carefully. And for some people that might need to be narrowed down to two or three ideas to take forward, woven together – don't get hung up on having to have just one result.

So on the Sensing/iNtuition dimension, this coaching model and type theory help each other out.

Follow the logic or what really matters?

When we don't know what we want, we easily slide down the route of simply making the 'logical' choice – based on best subjects at school or most money we can earn. Now that could be brilliant... but so often (especially in our youth) we are following other people's logic rather than our own, and in the end we find we're not where we'd hoped to be.

It is worth taking time to figure out our own personal core values – what things are most important to us individually – and use that information to help sift our logical options. But if we naturally 'go with what feels right', a look at the logical pro/con arguments may at the very least help us go into the future we've chosen with our eyes open.

Intuitive/Perceiving types might find that listing and prioritising their options (opposite to their normal inclinations) may help clear their minds and weed out the most unhelpful options. Sensing/Perceiving types are often helped by dabbling in unfamiliar possibilities – trying them out to see how they feel – which may also help to at least usefully shorten the list of options.

So, again, the Thinking/Feeling dimension and the coaching model support each other.

A single path or many?

Have you ever come across that popular coaching question – "if you could do anything at all with your life, with money no object and a guarantee of success, what would it be?" Sometimes people

react “I’ve no idea! That’s why I’ve come to you”, other people are very clear exactly what they would do.



But others react with dismay at the idea of choosing just one possibility – what about all the other things they want from their lives? They might be struggling with a life that’s too narrow for them to begin with, or being energised juggling many things. How can they choose just one as the right answer?

A person with a Judging preference tends to have a clear idea of where they are going (or is quite distressed by lack of clarity). Someone with a Perceiving preference is more distressed by making a choice before they feel ready.

After we go through all the workings-out and feel we have come up with a clear, true vision (which I suspect is hard for those who don’t have Introverted Intuition in one of their 4 conscious functions, and may not happen) and can see a path to get there ... is “go for it” always the obvious route forward?

Well, sometimes the time isn’t right. We may have a clear plan to make an apple crumble from apples off our own trees, but if it is only June it really isn’t going to work. We have to decide if using our own apples is the most important thing, or making a crumble in June with someone else’s apples, or doing something completely different like cake.

As with fruit, sometimes with life – circumstances need to mature, the moment to ripen; we need to wait. If we push for our goals prematurely, we risk the outcome being miscarried. This can be a challenge to some with a Judging preference, for whom lack of resolution may be a real trial. Our extraverted perceiving function can support us in this wait: for example those who are Intuitive/Judging types could practise being in the present moment (Extraverted Sensing) and see it as a time of preparation; for Sensing/Judging types, explore random possibilities to enlarge your experience while you wait (Extraverted Intuition) – again, in preparation for the direction you are aiming for.

And how important are goals, anyway?

Do you want to define your life simply by the goals you achieve, or is the person you become important to you? Do you prefer to let your life evolve and work with what is given to you, or do you feel a need to set a plan and work towards it? We all need goals to some extent – but when they are on the inside others are less aware of them. Goals to do with inner values (authenticity, relationships, contentment, health, adventure) rather than the job you do can help you be more ready to tackle your ‘big plan’ when it’s time.

Whatever your external goals, internal choices like working on your virtues and values are always beneficial, helping you to mature as a person. If you find you can’t move toward your outer life goals yet, how about learning self-awareness, or work



towards health goals, or spend time on relationships with your family? The chances are that when you are driving towards the goals you’ve defined for that outer, visible life, these will fall by the wayside – to your disadvantage in the long run.