

Career Guidance Intervention

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Episode 3: Finding Meaning in a Career

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In the final episode, we wrap up the conversation by unpacking the journey to finding meaning in a career. We discuss our own journeys in pursuit of purpose and the importance of meaning in motivation and legacy creation.

Transcript

Episode 3: Finding Meaning In A Career

Intro: This is a podcast presented by Psychology Masters students from the University of the Free State, brought to you by the Directorate of Community Engagement.

Amantle: Hello everyone, welcome to episode three of our podcast. My name is Amantle Mmileng. I'm a masters in clinical psychology student, and today we'll be looking at finding meaning in a career.

In our last episode, we engaged with you on various tools and resources in making a career choice or a career shift. This is quite daunting because oftentimes people still struggle in forming a connection with the careers that they have shortlisted. This can be traced to finding meaning or purpose within a specific career.

Studies indicate that the average adult spends about 2860 hours of their lives per year on work. South Africa forms part of the countries with the highest number of working hours in the world. Sadly, this is a significant amount of time out of your 8000 hours plus in a year it would be better spent in a way that is meaningful to you. This is the crux of our episode today. Can we actually find meaning in a career path? And if we can, how?

You know, guys, studies actually also indicate that most people around the world connect their careers to purpose or meaning in life. Just think about it. By the time most people reach old age, they begin looking for new ways of feeling purposeful or spend a significant amount of time reminiscing over the good years they spent building legacies and impacting the lives of others. But there's also time spent on reflecting on their meaningful contributions to society.

The next few decades of your journey are truly vital. It is really no wonder why so many students continually question themselves over the career choices they have made and whether or not such decisions are truly relevant to them.

You know, I've also been reflecting quite a bit in terms of my own journey to getting to where I am right now as a trainee psychologist. When I was making a career decision back in high school, I was really confronted with a lot of information in terms of... I looked at my older siblings, the careers they were in, and of course I looked at how much money it looked like they were making. And those were the things that were informing the types of career decisions I was making. And essentially it affected my joy when I started my first years of university.

This led to my many career changes over the years. I'm not gonna go into it, but there were a lot of changes before I found my own journey. I had to ask myself what is right for Amantle? You know, it actually took the death of one of my brothers for me to sit down and really reflect on the type of life that I want to live.

At the end of the day, I don't really think it takes a near death experience or decades of years of regret for you to essentially find what is most meaningful to you, to find the journey that you feel like "This is the life that I'll be proud of one day", and I think it starts a lot with understanding your own personal values. What are the things that you would like to uphold? What is purposeful for you, and what is the legacy that you want to live and live behind?

Beyond the technical things that you'll contribute in your role, what connects you to the role that you will play one day?

Remember that there will be off days, days where you just feel like I don't wanna wake up and go to work. I am honestly tired even on the days that you are proud of the job that you've chosen or the career that you've chosen. But purpose is one of those things that have been

found to encourage, you know, to motivate people to want to get up and still do the work despite the difficulties that one will encounter.

At this time, I'm going to invite some of our peers here at the Department of Psychology for a candid discussion, looking into their journey of finding meaning in their careers. We have all found ourselves pursuing a similar dream, becoming psychologists, but within the same career path we have found meaning in different ways. I'd like to welcome to this section some of my colleagues whom you've met in the previous episodes Bontle Sibuyi, Tanica Vorster and Rearabetsoe Moduane. All these people that I've mentioned are Masters candidates in psychology, whether clinical or counselling psychology, and I'd like to pose the first question to Bontle. How did you journey to where you are right now? Can you share a little bit of that with us?

Bontle: Yeah, well I'd like to say my journey was different to most of my colleagues. Journey in the sense that I always knew what I wanted to be. I always knew what I wanted to be. I didn't think it was going to happen at this age because I am the youngest person in the class. and normally people do this at the age of 30, 28, and I'm only 23 years of age and you can only imagine how hard that has been. But at the beginning of this journey (this was back in primary school) where I would be very comfortable with talking to people about their problems. And that's what people think psychology is, right? Yeah, well, and they thought you can read people's minds, but that's not what it is. But anyways, I started in primary school where I remember when I was in. Still, this girl came to me and said, since people are very comfortable with talking to you, what do you think you want to be? And I was like, I want to be an accountant, you know, I thought accounting was it for me only to actually find out that no therapy is what I would excel in. And that's part of me giving back to the community. And from then when she mentions psychology to me because she thought that that's what I need to do because of the person that I am towards other people, I started researching on it. That's

why I mentioned it in the first episode. Research is very, very important. I researched on it and I realized that while this is it, this is what I want to be and years later, here I am.

Amantle: You know, you mentioned a very important point that the people around you are also reflecting both in terms of some of the qualities that you might not even recognize in yourself. So I think that's something important listeners to consider in your own journey. Thank you for sharing that Bontle. Rea, perhaps you can share with us what does meaning entail to you in a career specifically?

Rearabetsoe: In short, and this is not even going to be deep or anything. But meaning in a career for me is essentially finding a way to take elements of the career and elements of who you are and making sure that they intertwine. To me, that's what meaning is.

Amantle: So finding that connecting point

Rearabetsoe: Hm

Amantle: Thank you for sharing that Rea. Uhm Tanica, perhaps you can also add to that in terms of your own personal journey, how did you find me in this career or where do you think your meaning stems from?

Tanica: Uhm well Amantle, I think meaning in this career stems from just being able to connect with other people and sharing a conversation, being there for people who do not have a lot of social support in other contexts. That's really meaningful to me.

Amantle: Oh, thank you so much Tanica. Perhaps one of you can share in terms of some of the struggles you encountered on your journey pursuing psychology. I know that psychology is one of those difficult careers to pursue, especially getting into a masters program. So what are some of your struggles?

Bontle: Like I mentioned earlier on, I did my research and I knew that you need to go through different stages. BUT I didn't know how difficult it was going to be. From a class of 1000, to a class of 12. You can imagine how difficult that is. You have to go through interviews to be selected. You need to do some research work to be selected. There's a whole lot of things that goes into psychology before you're selected, and This is why we always say that you need to do your research.

Amantle: Yeah

Bontle: Because we still have students that go into psychology thinking that after you do your undergrad, that is it. You're a psychologist. No, it is not. But if you do do your research, you know that you need to do a three-year course, then do your honours, THEN your masters with some internship that comes along with those. And that's something that we still need to go through. So the challenges that I've encountered is having to get to the top six of the Masters program, yeah. And it was really, really difficult for me. I had to go through interviews, which was difficult like I've mentioned. And then at the end, this is where we are.

Rearabetsoe: And in a way, I think that really does relate. If you find meaning in something that you really want to do, it gives you strength to go through all of those processes. So yeah, thank you for that Bontle.

Amantle: And you know, interestingly, this is something that you'll encounter in various careers as well in professions. It's not something that's unique to psychology. I know I've met some students who are interested in becoming Chartered Accountants and they think the three-year degree they already within, but it's also a 7 year journey. So that research will really be essential even as you find meaning as Rea has nicely indicated that this will be the support that will help you navigate that journey. But do your research, know what you're

getting yourself into and like was mentioned previously by Rea, set the goals, know what you're working towards.

Think about meaning in your sphere of influence. Does meaning for you surround people, teaching, formulating products, pharmaceuticals? Is it in creating structures, buildings, technologies, wealth creation, or other services that improve the lives of others? Let's take a moment to look within and reflect as we consider our career journeys. If you have a piece of paper or a journal close by, grab a pen and bring the writing material closer. Or for all my tech savvy listeners open up that note app on your device. Begin with that list of non-negotiable values that you want to uphold for the rest of your life. Take this minute to jot those down because meaning is such a pivotal part of your journey. Spend the next few days thinking and planning on how this fits in with your career field. Remember that it is possible to find meaning in the career you've already chosen by incorporating new principles and key actions as you plan out your career.

I would like to leave you with these words of Victor Frankl: "Life is never made unbearable by circumstances, but only by lack of meaning and purpose". Or as Steve Jobs put it: "Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work". Adios.

Outro: This podcast was brought to you by the University of the Free State, inspiring excellence, transforming lives through quality, impact and care.