

## **Culling Through Careers: Tips on choosing one that's right for you**

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Some lucky people know exactly what career path to follow. However, Allison Kast, a youth pastor and former college admissions counselor, says she talks frequently to students who are struggling to figure out what to do career-wise. Allison herself remembers the difficulty of choosing a major and a career field. Reports Kast, "It was overwhelming. I felt lost in many ways."

One of my out-of-state clients, Laura Cooper, felt much like Allison did. After graduating from college, Laura, a focused over-achiever and life-time sports enthusiast, culled through career possibilities. Certain only of her love for sports, Laura took a job with a National League Football Franchise as an office assistant. Later she moved up to a position of more responsibility.

After two years, Laura began to realize she was in a job just because it was available, not in a career that really represented who she was. While working directly with the coaches and players fed her passion for sports, it didn't satisfy her. She knew she had to move on career-wise.

Laura decided that the first step of choosing a career required dedicated self evaluation. She contacted me and we followed a two-pronged approach. First, I asked Laura to take some time to clarify her values, since setting out on major journeys of transition without that inner compass can lead to confusion.

Then with the help of an assessment called "The About-U Report", I guided her through a process of what she called "self-definition". We identified Laura's obvious and not-so-obvious motivators. We clarified her strengths, major interests, and compatible job families. We identified and described hidden behaviors which shed light on the causes of her stress reactions. From studying the results of her About-U, Laura learned she would probably be most satisfied and productive in a position requiring counseling and advising skills.

Next, Laura researched a variety of careers associated with advising skills. She searched internet sites such as CNNMoney (<http://money.cnn.com>), O\*net (<http://onlin.onetcenter.org>), the Bureau of Labor Statistics (<http://www.bls.gov/k12/>), and the Occupational Outlook Handbook (<http://www.bls.gov/oco/home.htm>). She perused books such as What Color Is Your Parachute and Why Men Earn More (which tells how women can earn more)

She narrowed the field to three possible careers based on personal suitability, job responsibilities, salary, working conditions, and future prospects. She profiled each career, interviewed people involved in the careers, and even arranged to do some job shadowing. Result: Laura expects to begin graduate studies this fall at an East Coast University in a combined Master of Social Work and Juris Doctor program.

If you, like Laura, are in the process of transitioning into a new career, follow Laura's example:

1. Dedicate yourself to a period of self evaluation
2. Research a variety of careers within job families that are compatible with your emotional, social, and intellectual abilities and needs
3. Narrow the field to a short list
4. Refine your research by profiling the "short-list" careers, interviewing and job-shadowing people in those careers.
5. Go for it!