

Planned Happenstance and Your Career

The excitement and hopefulness of planning your career are often combined with the stress of uncertainty of what's ahead. Forecasting our future careers is not so simple when there are forces beyond our control; technological, economic, social and political impacts can make career journeys more non-linear than ever before.

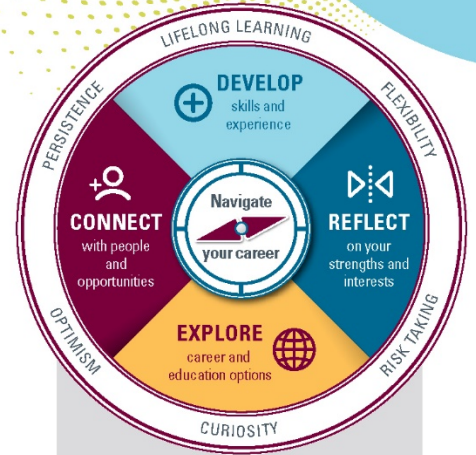
Additionally, your career development doesn't come with a map to outline your career path and direct you from point A (career planning) to point B (an established career).

How can you navigate your career journey with more confidence?

The Planned Happenstance model can help. It's a career development theory that focuses on your attitudes and actions during the process. The theory founders, John Krumboltz, Al Levin and Kathleen Mitchell, describe it as "the view that you can create opportunities by taking action on your curiosity and on chance events. It is not just luck or being in the right place at the right time. It is a conscious, purposeful, and on-going process that will help you to build a more satisfying and fulfilling career."

Planned Happenstance outlines five key traits to navigate your career:

- 1. Curiosity:** Explore new opportunities and follow your interests by talking with people and learning new things. Create opportunities for chance events to occur by going to a networking event, chatting with a professional in your field of interest or trying out a new activity. Be curious about the opportunities and consider all the possibilities.
- 2. Persistence:** Expect that there will be obstacles in your path. Stay persistent and surround yourself with supportive people who can help you overcome challenges. Throughout this process, you're building grit and awareness of your strengths.
- 3. Flexibility:** Keep an open mind and be flexible with changing attitudes and circumstances. It's okay to change or adapt plans and create new plans!
- 4. Optimism:** View new opportunities as attainable and assume that good things will happen. Focus on thoughts like "How can I do this?" instead of "I can't do this because..." There's value in every experience, paid or unpaid. Be confident and know how to explain the benefits of each experience.
- 5. Risk-taking:** Expand your comfort zone to learn as much as possible. When faced with uncertainty, pause to evaluate what you need to feel more certain, but also recognize that everything has uncertainty to it. Try not to let the uncertainty stop you from taking action. This will help you create new opportunities and possibilities. Not taking action will guarantee no opportunities.



Overview

This activity will help you understand and consider some key traits for navigating your career.

Time for activity

15 minutes

Tips

Embrace the idea that uncertainty has benefits!



Activity

Reflect on an unplanned or unexpected experience (or a “lucky break”) that impacted your career/education journey so far. Describe the situation briefly.

Reflect on which of the five Planned Happenstance traits (curiosity, persistence, flexibility, optimism, risk-taking) were evident in your situation.

How did the unplanned/unexpected experience shape your career journey?

Evaluate yourself on the five Planned Happenstance traits by selecting one of the three levels for each.

Curiosity	_____ confident	_____ unsure	_____ needs work
Persistence	_____ confident	_____ unsure	_____ needs work
Flexibility	_____ confident	_____ unsure	_____ needs work
Optimism	_____ confident	_____ unsure	_____ needs work
Risk-taking	_____ confident	_____ unsure	_____ needs work

Are there ways you can leverage your strengths to help you navigate your career path?

Sources:

Luck is No Accident: Making the Most of Happenstance in Your Life and Career, Kathleen Mitchell, Al Levin and John Krumboltz “Planned Happenstance: Constructing Unexpected Career Opportunities” *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 1999.