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THE LAST WORD

Reflections on Engaging Careers Advice



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FROM NEWMANGO



I have been doing much reflection recently. I have been reflecting on career theories, reflecting on my practice and even reflecting on reflection. I am in the final throes of completing my 3 unit top-up qualification to achieve the equivalent of the Level 6 Diploma in Careers Guidance and Development. As a Connexions Personal Adviser, entering the profession from a youth/support worker background, I was required to achieve a Level 4 NVQ in Learning Development and Support Services. Now I have happily happened upon happenstance and returned as a fully-fledged and professionally qualified Careers Adviser. To fulfil the UK Register of Career Development Professionals qualification criteria as well as statutory recommendations to work in schools, I require the 3 extra units; 'Reflect on and improve personal practice', 'Career guidance theory' and 'Using Career and Labour Market Information with clients'.

So how do I feel, 30,000 words later, 6 months down the line and still counting reflections instead of sheep in my sleep? Have I made the right choice? Absolutely! I feel that I have earned my stripes and acquired a wealth of knowledge and experience to boot. I have been reassured in my reflection to realise that I use elements of each of the different career theories in my practice.

I work in Pupil Referral Units, predominantly with Year 11 students to support with the transition process into Post 16. This cohort has a range of mental health, behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Many of these young people have diagnosed learning disabilities and a large proportion have anxiety related illnesses.

Many are very anxious about what happens next. Many are worried about going from the small, inclusive and supportive environment they have been referred to, back to the type of location which created the issues. Some are so anxious and/or so disengaged with education that they do not want to meet with me to discuss their options. Some, would not be able to cope with a full-time college course or a college setting. Others have unrealistic aims altogether. To capture all these different

scenarios and more, I need to be mindful of the fragility of my clients and use tools dipped in different career theories to support, empower and enable them. I see my role as a *Skilled Helper*; Egan, G. (1988), in understanding the present situation, identifying the preferred situation and formulating an action plan together, to succeed.

Egan suggests clients as having 'problem situations', 'missed opportunities' and 'unused potential'. To tap into these, the practitioner needs to relate to the individual and then the problem or opportunity, to release the potential.

I would not be in such a profession if I did not believe I had the three core conditions, which are the fundamental qualities for a person-centered approach, as described by Rogers (1961) in being essential for an empowering process; Respect, Genuineness and Empathy.

So I have adapted these wise theories to put into words the way I understand it and also because I love acronyms.

The *NewMango Theory for Careers Guidance* is simple:

Lend an **EAR**:

Practical requirements to build and sustain a professional relationship

- Empathy
- Awareness
- Respect.

Provide a **LIP** service:

- Listen – Listen to their story. What has happened? What is happening now? What do they want to happen?
- Interpret – Understand their story. Challenges so far. Concerns they may have. Hope and dreams.
- Plan – Create a step by step Action Plan. Follow this up to discuss progress – always amending and updating.

If you have these qualities and have the skills to pass them on to your student, you have the ability to support and enable others.

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