

DECIDING WHAT TO DO AFTER High School



- **BEGIN BY ASKING YOURSELF SOME QUESTIONS:**

- What do I know about the opportunities available to me?
- Have I explored a lot of different sources of information about education, careers, and self-development?
- Have I figured out what I believe in, what I value, what's important to me?
- Have I talked to my parents, counselor, and friends and sorted through my own ideas and dreams?
- Do I have a clear picture of my own skills, talents, achievements, and special qualities?

- **ANY DECISIONS YOU MAKE, YOU CAN CHANGE.**

- You can change your mind no matter what you decide.
- You are not locked into any of your decisions.
- Do not make up your mind until you have sorted through all the options.
- The most popular options are college, vo-tech, military, employment, apprenticeships, and on-the-job training.

- **HOW DO I KNOW WHAT IS RIGHT FOR ME?**

- Choosing what to do after high school is an important decision, but it is not a matter of life or death.
- Personal growth and career preparation can take place in many settings.
- If you plan well, you will probably make a good decision.
- Remember, any decision can be changed.
- Thousands of students transfer each year.
- Sometimes the decision is not entirely in your hands. Colleges and parents have a hand in it, too.
- Concentrate on identifying several colleges, vo-techs, etc., at which you think you can be happy.

- **THINGS YOU CAN DO TO IMPROVE YOUR CHANCES OF FEELING SATISFIED WITH YOUR DECISION.**

- Think about your goals.
- What do you want from a post-secondary school?
 - Prep for a career?
 - Meet new people?
 - Liberal arts education?
 - Vocational training?
 - Chance to live in another part of the USA?
 - Participate in athletics?
- Most people have several goals--both long and short range. List yours.

- **IF IT IS HARD TO FIGURE OUT WHAT YOU ARE INTERESTED IN, LOOK AT HOW YOU LEARN.**

- Can you handle large classes?
- Do you need individual attention?
- Do you like independent study?
- Do you work better in a structured environment?
- Do you like a competitive environment?
- Do you like being with lots of different people?



Do not treat each decision as if it is final or cast in stone.

Make the best possible choice based on given information and circumstances.

If you think in terms of mistakes, your fear of making an error will color your judgement.

Break the habit of procrastination.

The quality of a decision is rarely improved by putting it off.

Focus on the issue at hand.

Do not be distracted by side issues; try to state the main issue of the decision in one sentence.

Be open to a variety of options.

Preconceived notions about the way something "should be" can prevent you from seeing the full range of alternatives.

Know when to stop collecting data.

Set a time frame and a minimum number of options to investigate.

Trust your intuition.

More successful educators acknowledge that intuition plays a key role in decision making when used in conjunction with experience, information, and reason.

Let go of other people's negative judgments.

Make your decision based on what is best for you and your situations, not based on what other people think you should do.

Learn to relax and clear your mind.

When your mind is cluttered, it is difficult to make a good decision, so remove yourself from the problem for awhile.

Practice making decisions.

Your anxiety will decrease as you become more practiced.

THERE ARE FOUR STAGES OF DECISION DEVELOPMENT:

Fantasy: People speculate about various choices without a realistic frame of reference. They dream about things without taking into consideration all of the factors.

Tentative: People take into consideration their interests, capabilities, and values when they think about a decision.

Realistic: People study the options available in terms of both their own needs and the realistic chances they have of different outcomes. They begin to broaden and then to narrow down their choices. At the very end of this state they arrive at a decision about the direction in which they are heading. The major activity during this state is understanding--the

understanding of both themselves and the world. Implementation: This is the final stage when people begin to act upon their decisions. Action here can mean a variety of different activities--taking required courses, applying for a training program, etc.

THE TRUTH IS THAT DEVELOPMENT RARELY PROGRESSES SO LOGICALLY AND EVENLY FOR MOST PEOPLE AS DEFINED BY THE FOUR STAGES. SOMETIMES PEOPLE SKIP STAGES, AND SOMETIMES THEY CAN BE IN MORE THAN ONE STAGE AT THE SAME TIME. TO COMPLICATE THINGS EVEN FURTHER, SOME PEOPLE GO THROUGH THE ENTIRE PROCESS MORE THAN ONCE.