A Positive Prognosis:
Effectively Assisting Cancer Patients in Career Decision Making

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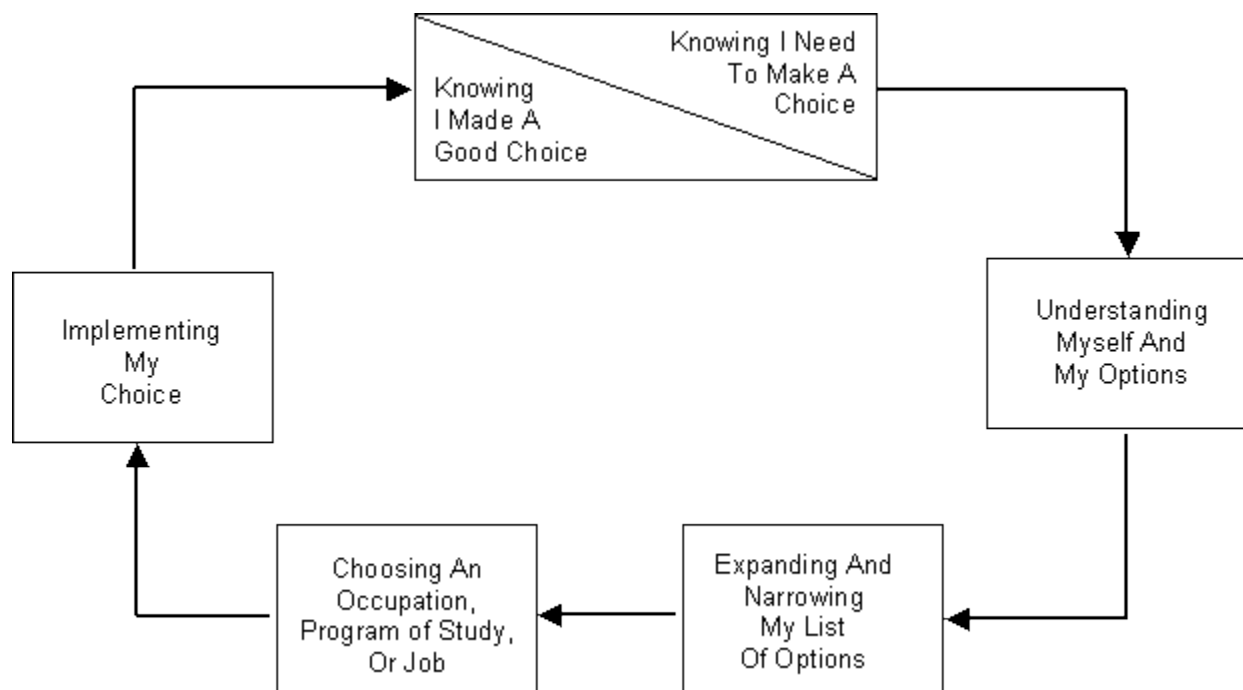www.linkedin.com/elizabethpawley
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- Each year, 12.7 million people world-wide are diagnosed with cancer (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013).
- Although modern medical advancements continue to improve the quality of life for cancer patients, these individuals still encounter challenging illness-related career concerns.
- We must understand each individual's concerns, personal characteristics and contextual factors in terms of chronic illness in order to help them through career decision making.

Using Cognitive Information Processing (CIP) Approach's CASVE Cycle
Client version: Sampson, Reardon, Peterson, & Lenz (2004)

Guide to Good Decision Making

Knowing I Need to Make a Choice
Internal/external signals
Events, comments from friends and relatives, the way I feel, physical problems

Understanding Myself and My Options
Understanding my values, interests, and skills
Understanding specific occupations, job options, and alternative ways to work
Understanding how I make decisions and how I *think* about my decisions; self-talk

Expanding and Narrowing My List of Options
Identify options that fit my values, interests, and skills
Pick 3-5 best options (synthesis and elaboration)

Choosing an Option
Analyze costs and benefits of each option to: myself, my family, my cultural group, my community, society
Rank options
Make a choice (and a backup choice!)

Implementing My Choice
Plan, try out, and apply

Knowing I Made a Good Choice
Evaluating choice: how have things changed?
How did my friends and relatives react?
How do I feel now?

Applying the CASVE Cycle to a Case Study

Shelly is a 43 year old ICU nurse. She has worked at two different hospitals in her career, and has been at her current place of work for 15 years. Shelly works with her best friends every day, feels rewarded in her daily interactions with patients, is financially comfortable, and is especially appreciative of her insurance benefits. After her routine mammogram, Shelly received the difficult news that she was diagnosed with stage III breast cancer. A discussion with an oncologist left Shelly feeling paralyzed and terrified to begin a long term treatment consisting of chemotherapy, surgery and radiation. Her husband is begging her to quit her job immediately, stay at home, rest for the duration of her treatment, and enjoy time with her two high school-aged children. He mentions he is scared of losing her, and wants to spend every moment he can with her. While Shelly values family time, she is depressed and is struggling to find a way to receive the same social and financial support that she does at work as well maintain the sense of purpose she gets from helping others daily. She has come to you, a career counselor, to start the process of adjusting to her new medical condition, specifically in terms of her occupation.

What stage of the CASVE cycle is Shelly in?
What questions would you ask or interventions would you try to facilitate Shelly to the next stage of the cycle?

Resources

Cancer Care offers counseling, support groups, education and financial assistance to cancer patients: http://www.cancercare.org/counseling

About.com Career Planning discusses legal rights, benefits and other resources upon diagnosis and during treatment: http://careerplanning.about.com/cs/legalissues/a/cancer.htm

Cancer and Careers is a comprehensive portal complete with webinars, resume help, and advice from career coaches in terms of cancer: http://www.cancerandcareers.org/en

References

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2013). GLOBOCAN 2012 v1.0, Cancer Incidence and Mortality Worldwide: IARC CancerBase No. 11 [Internet].

Sampson, J.P., Reardon, R.C., Peterson, G.W., & Lenz, J.G. (2004) Career counseling & services: A cognitive information processing approach. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole.