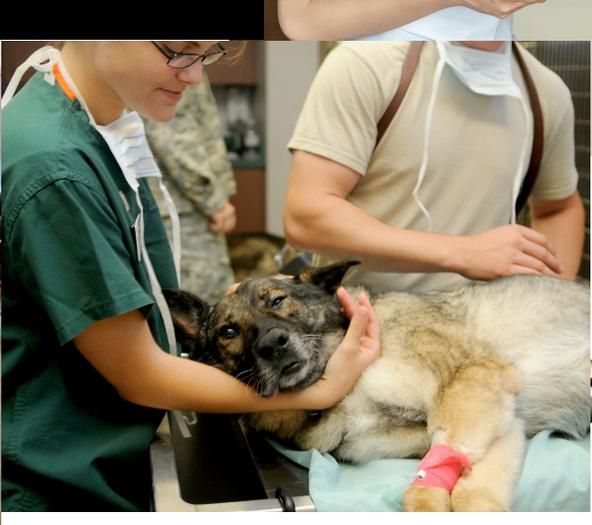


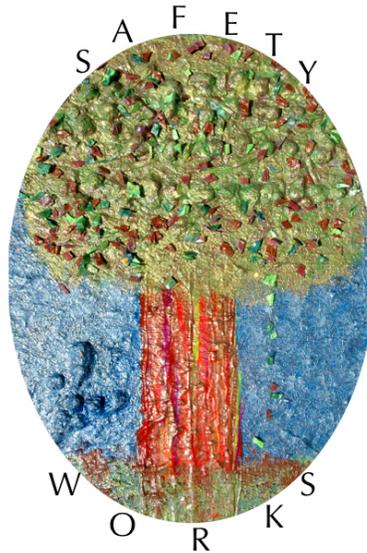


Power Practices



Explore
Options
and Create Your
Satisfying
Work Life





SAFETY WORKS© (SW) is an interdependent model that guides students through career exploration. SW includes strength recognition, career assessments, and this career readiness workbook. The engaging curriculum is designed for all students who want more clarity about choosing a career direction right for them. SW assists students with learning disabilities, ADHD, and ASD because it is so individualized. The purpose is to prepare youth for a job they want, can do, and to find personal satisfaction. Secondly, SW can help youth adapt personally and socially to have increased effectiveness in a career.

S.A.F.E.T.Y WORKS©

S. Student selects strengths: hard skills, self-expression, personal preferences, self-awareness

A. Self Advocacy

F. Foster self awareness through Power Practices.

E. Create ease on tasks with tools.

T. Transform young adults and

Y. Youth through career exploration and their careers.

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Audience: counselors in high school and community colleges, educators in student transition, career courses, employment specialists, students seeking career possibilities, and parents.

Jackie Marquette PhD
Marquette Index, LLC.
drjackiemarquette@gmail.com
www.marquettestrengthsindex.com

Before Beginning

The student or a young adult may want more information about jobs and careers that match their strengths and interests. *Marquette Strengths and Career Index*© can help. Go to this link marquettestrengthsindex.com Individuals will enjoy finding their strengths and interests in academics, self expression (multiple intelligences/arts), personal preferences, and self awareness. Most excitingly, with the *Index*, they receive a list of jobs/careers that match strengths and interests. The possibilities are numerous and presented in categories: advanced college degrees, college education, certifications/training, high school diploma, self employment, volunteer, and hobbies.

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A Message to Professionals, Assistants, Mentors, and Parents

I am thrilled you have the *Power Practice Curriculum* in your hand. I think you will find this tool helpful for students and young adults in career readiness, exploration, starting a new job or career. Many educators, professionals, and parents are frantic about how to change the current outcomes of students transitioning from school to underemployment or joblessness. National high school drop out occurs for one student every 26 seconds or about 7,000 students per day, according to Orange County United Way. This is alarming and many of these students and their families are in a state of crisis.

If we look closely, a shift has already begun, highlighting talented individuals who have also struggled with challenges or life conditions. There are many examples in the media of individuals creating and participating in artistic endeavors. For over a decade world renown individuals who have autism have been spreading the awareness and knowledge about gifts and strengths. Two of the many prominent people include Stephen Shore and Temple Grandin. Strength recognition and development is the path many have journeyed. I define strengths as: “anchors to one’s contributions and life satisfaction. Strengths are opened windows to creating life satisfaction”.

I discovered through many research participants and my adult son who has autism, attempts to rid one of an undesired behavior first before an introduction to a job, or studies at the university is ***the wrong pathway***. It is the strength and unique abilities that open doors regardless of disability challenges. One example of a young teenager with ASD who plays in competitive tennis tournaments relies on support for someone to tie her shoes and put her hair in a pony tail.

When there is a focus on imperfections and weaknesses of a student, I call this ‘*intense squandering of strengths*’. Worse, the deficit focus has a negative impact on the student as they receive messages that they are their disability deficits, I call this ‘*focused imperfection overload*’. Taken internally, the individual experiences low well being and learned helplessness.

Dr. Martin Seligman, a scholar in positive psychology is a leader in researching ‘strengths’. I heard him speak at a School Psychologists Conference in 2005. I was moved by his speech. He talked about how we are here to find what we are good at doing. He explained that the traditional approach has been to find out what people are doing wrong, then to find ways to correct. He claims we’ve been doing this even though there are no data that supports the practice.

Choosing a career direction that becomes a good match is dependent upon the student first knowing his/her strengths. I had a conversation once with a special education director who, sadly, shared that none of her seniors who had Aspergers, Autism, or ADHD could name one strength they had. The teachers had given the student’s portfolio assignment to write about one of more of their strengths. The director’s experience was similar to what I have experienced in my own research. Without strength recognition, most students are not likely to succeed in college or on a job.

Strengths are anchors to one’s contributions and life satisfaction.
Strengths are opened windows to creating life satisfaction.

The career exploration with the self-emotional awareness activities in *POWER PRACTICES: Explore Careers and Create Your Own Pathway*© workbook can engage a student or young adult to see the possibilities of choosing their own career direction. Moreover, the activities can increase student self-awareness for job effectiveness and safety because situations can occur suddenly, be unpredictable, and confusing.

As an educator, employment specialist, or parent you have a powerful role in guiding a student. The level of support you will offer a student or young adult should be individualized. The *Power Practice Curriculum* is designed to guide students to use their strengths toward their desires, hopes, and talents in a direction they want to go. Erik Erikson said, “Life doesn’t make any sense without interdependence. We need each other, and the sooner we learn that, the better for us all.” I see interdependence in the workplace as follows:

“Interdependence is a mutual reliance of each individual’s contribution within a creative employment structure enhancing the whole environment.”

In contrast, when we focus on ‘independence’ it is an assumption the individual must accomplish and perform the ‘do it yourself’ approach. While independence is a good goal to have and brings feelings of autonomy, many fail at being independent. They fail not because they can’t do the job, but may have difficulty in managing all aspects of preparing for work, getting to work, performing daily under change and sometimes chaotic situations. I offer four interdependent support categories. To read about Interdependent Support Categories that meet the individual where she is, explanations and a descriptive chart is provided in Appendix B. *Understanding Interdependent Levels and Supports: For Supporters and Assistants Understanding*

My research emerged with findings that show positive impact upon student work performances: a) strengths as the focus, b. physical/and task structures supported, and c. preferences and emotional supports in place which enhanced safety, and capability. I call these supports as ‘*individualized surrounding upgrades*’. These are much more than the outcome of effective performance. The ‘*individualized surrounding upgrades*’ come in the form of verbal and structure support. The impact upon the student is ‘*mirrored confidence*’. When we show confidence through creative supports, then emotions of safety and ease is reflected like a mirror back to the student. Students and young adults rely on us to create these supports and teach them strategies for self advocacy. Supports are not created on their own. They don’t just happen.

“Life doesn’t make any sense without interdependence. We need each other, and the sooner we learn that, the better for us all.”

Erik Erikson

The *POWER PRACTICES: Explore Careers and Create Your Own Pathway*© workbook is divided into seven parts.

Part I: Introduction

The student will commit to the engaging process of career exploration.

Part II. Take Part in Your Career Exploration The student will choose a career/job to explore.

Part III: Using Your Self Expression in Careers

The student will choose an interest drawn from a talent or strength to explore.

Part IV: Know your Personal Preferences

The student will choose and practice using Personal Preference tools to bring more ease and capability in a setting or situation.

Part V: Evaluate your Career Choice

The student will choose one or more jobs or careers from their career exploration activities for evaluation. A chart with a checklist provides easy guidance.

Part VI: Practice Self-Awareness

The student will read scenarios of individuals with similar struggles. Next steps are offered for student practice.

Part VII: Appendices

Preface

It is my pleasure to share with you tools that can guide students 14 and older to job readiness and accessibility to their desired job, vocation, or career. This workbook *POWER PRACTICES: Explore Careers and Create Your Own Pathway*© is written to assist all students and can assist students and young adults with ADHD, Aspergers, Autism Spectrum Disorders, and other health impairments. These individuals were more than just my students, they were my teachers in my classroom, school transition services, clients in private practice, spanning over three decades.

It was my intention to write the *POWER PRACTICES: Explore Careers and Create Your Own Pathway*© workbook in a conversational style to the student. I wanted the student to see and feel the value of their own strengths and see how their strengths apply to jobs and careers. Transition from school is a big jump into a new phase of life and the more prepared students are the more ease they will experience.

It is my hope the activities assist the student in accessing ways to develop their strengths and exploring job/career possibilities that match strengths and interests. I describe this workbook as *Power Practices*, because it is my belief the *power-of-practice* will enhance student confidence and the transfer of skills to a job. A student's self awareness is a high priority for success on a job or in college studies. These *Power Practices* offer 31 self-awareness activities. Each activity was written based upon an actual person I assisted through my work or as their mentor. The names, age, and gender have all been changed to avoid any connection to the individual.

Parents want to know how their child or young adult transitioning out of school with ASD can reach success in adulthood. Specifically, they want to know how to best prepare their son or daughter for work or for the pursuit of college. Barry Prizant, Phd., CCC-SLP, gives excellent advice. Author of the SCERTS Model and his latest book, *Uniquely Human: A Different Way of Seeing Autism* offers these top priorities that lead to success in adulthood:

- a. build self-expression
- b. build self-esteem
- c. instill happiness
- d. create positive experiences
- e. emphasize healthy relationships
- f. develop self-awareness

To this list, I added to

- g. promote job effectiveness

I have attempted to include these priorities pointing out to the student the personal gain they receive in doing the activities in this workbook. Often positive outcomes require much focus and occur over a period of time. It is sometimes difficult to see small strides made in the right direction. I hope I have accomplished this task.

Before a student participates in *POWER PRACTICES: Explore Careers and Create Your Own Pathway*©, he or she may want to discover all their strengths, ones that ring true to them.

The student can take the the *MSCI*© at marquettestrengthsindex.com These are the four broad areas to determine strengths:

Hard Skills/Cognitive and Academic
Self-Expression draws on Multiple Intelligences
Personal Preferences
Self-Awareness.

After the student clicks the **submit** button, jobs and careers that match specific attributes in these categories: college, certifications/training, employment based on high school education (part time and full time), self employment, volunteer, and hobby. A printout list is provided to the student.

In conclusion, as a parent, I experienced the struggles, the tumultuous change, and the joys with Trent to employment and his self-employment art business. In fact, I am still on that journey and must confess as his mother I fear the unknown. The fear lingers each day and I feel vulnerable. I can relate to parents. But I focus on today. I also find a sense of relief in applying these tools and notice how well they support Trent's life to live the way he wants to live. Trent's companions and caregivers have all been trained to use these tools. The tools enhance Trent's daily life to: gain self awareness, use self care, feel safe through self advocacy, enjoy his self-expression in creating art, and having self satisfaction in life.

I appreciate the people who have been a support to me while writing *POWER PRACTICES: Explore Careers and Create Your Own Pathway*©. I want to thank Dr. Andy McCabe, Autism Radio Talk Show on HealthyLife.net and Associate Professor at New Jersey City University. He first saw the value of my creating a strengths recognition and career index for students with ASD. He encouraged me to create software so students can identify their strengths and receive careers that match them. Secondly, I want to thank influencers and scholars in the area of transition, employment, and the autism community with whose shoulders I stand upon. There are too many to mention here. Thirdly, I want to thank all the individuals to whom I provided a service or mentored and for whom I wanted the best possible outcome, they were my teachers. Fourthly, I want to thank my husband Ralph who has emotionally and financially supported all my efforts to create the MSCI© assessment and to write this workbook. Lastly, I want to thank Trent my autistic son who taught me about strengths and talents and support needs. They have enabled him to create his paintings and enjoy his unique life. My hope is that the tools will help youth and young adults too.

Part I. Welcome!



My name is Anna Marie. Congratulations in taking the first step to prepare for a career. I will be sharing with you how I explored my career interests.

The purpose of the Power Practice (PPC) workbook is to guide you through career exploration.

Do you want to know what you will get from this workbook? You will:

- get started on exploring a job or career that matches your strengths.
- learn how to develop your strengths and interests and apply them to a career or job, to self-employment or volunteer opportunity, or to a hobby.
- learn Personal Preferences and how to use these tools to create ease on tasks and during your day.
- complete a chart of one or more job/career options so you can select one that you like most.
- read numerous real-life examples of students wanting a job to go to college yet faced struggles. Learn how they didn't quit and made progress.
- read about actual people who practiced self-awareness to learn how to self advocate or to get empowered.

Moreover, this workbook will guide you to practice using your strengths to increase your chances for progress and success toward a career.

Preparing for a job or career is one of the most important phases in your life. It requires your focus.

I encourage you to spend time exploring career possibilities that appeal to you, and to develop your strengths further. If you took the MSCI©, be sure to have your list of strengths from Part A, Part B, Part C, and Part D, handy as you will want to refer to these to complete the activities.

In conclusion, realize you are unique. There are many job possibilities to use your strengths and interests. Here are three examples.

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Anna Marie sees her work life in her passion and love for toys.



Tim sees his work life in singing and playing the piano for other's enjoyment.



Jon sees his work life in balancing numbers as an assistant to an accountant.



POWER PRACTICES: *Explore Careers and Create Your Own Pathway*© workbook will guide you to create your own work life. Have fun exploring, because choosing a career is all about you.

A Message to You—You Are Unique

The sentences below are true about you. Read these to remind yourself how unique and valuable you are.

1. I am not flawed. I am a unique individual and my life is important.
2. I choose not to give up on myself.
3. I will not change who I am just to fit in a group.
4. I am a good and pleasing person.
5. I choose to trust myself and learn ways to keep myself safe.
6. I choose to ask for help when I need it.
7. I am worthy of being appreciated for my personal characteristics.
8. I choose to find a hobby, job, or career that matches my strengths and Personal Preferences.
9. I choose to practice calmness.

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10. I choose to wait and help someone to understand me.
11. When I am feeling low, I choose to seek one positive action to help myself.
12. I choose to accept myself for all of who I am, my capabilities, my challenges, and my unique characteristics.
13. I choose to rely upon people who have my best interests.
14. I seek to discover joy and pleasure in my career life.

Making An Agreement with Yourself



Read the following sentences. Sign your name as an agreement with yourself to begin career exploration. This is an important beginning step to your commitment to career exploration.

I, _____ (your name),

accept that I will explore jobs or careers that match my interests, abilities, and strengths.

I accept that I will practice skills to help me feel empowered, safe, and prepared for a job or career.

Part II: Take Part in Your Career Exploration

You will read examples of other students taking part in career exploration. This can be valuable as you learn about how to explore a career.

Anna Marie wants to share with you how she explored one of her job choices.



To have the job you want can only work well when it matches your strengths. This is very important. It is also important to have fun in exploring jobs and careers. Why? because having a career or a job is your next phase in life and this is the first step to getting prepared.

Exploring a career requires your focus. Look at this as fun and enjoyable process. You will want to choose a career to explore and find out required education and salary. Yet there is so much more to find out if a career or job is right for you.

There are several ways to find out information about a career. You can search the internet, watch YouTube videos, browse books and magazines in a library or local book store, and talk to people who have the kind of job you want. Have fun getting the important information from your exploration process then answer the guided questions in this section. As you complete each numbered task, check it off. This can be motivating as you move through the career exploration process.

Exploring a Career Interest: Read about Anna Marie's Choice

1. If you took the MSCI©, read through all of your academic strength findings to answer the questions. Remember you are about to enter a career exploration process. Don't get nervous if you see one of the vocational options from your MSCI© finding list that requires a college degree. These careers may or may not be right for you. But one may work well.

Check Off X

2. Write down one or more job or career options that you find interesting to explore. Anna Marie's answers:

I love toys, especially new toys of female super heroes. I would like to have a job where I work in a store around toys.



A Female Super Heroe.