

Lesson 1: Assessing Yourself



Think about people you know who are in their thirties, forties, and fifties. Some are no doubt happy, satisfied with their lives and fulfilled by the career they have chosen. Are there others who do not seem happy, who dislike their work, who feel things are at a dead end? One of the best things you can do to help yourself experience satisfaction in your work is to have a good understanding of who you are now. Knowing yourself well can help you realize what you value in life and the strengths you have to achieve the life you want.

People often do not have a clear picture of who they are or what they want out of life. Sometimes an individual takes on the wishes and expectations of people important to them—their parents or caregivers, their partners, friends, teachers—but this may not be what the individual truly wants to do with his or her life. Being able to accurately assess your personality, strengths and weaknesses, abilities, skills, likes and dislikes, and values helps you understand yourself. This knowledge can help you understand what you would like your life to be, including your career.

Knowing yourself is a complex process. What are the traits you like about yourself? Do you have characteristics that you do not like? Like most everyone, you probably assess yourself continually. You judge your actions, feelings, thoughts, and behaviours in many situations—sometimes you will judge yourself positively, sometimes negatively.

Self-assessment involves reflecting upon who you are now based on your thoughts, feelings, and reactions to your experiences. The purpose of self-assessment is to provide a path to the future, to assess yourself realistically, to compliment yourself on the positives, and to become the person you would like to be. You will be growing as a person throughout your life, so self-assessment is ongoing as well.



Mr. Romanchuk: You began some self-assessment in Module 1 as you explored how balanced your life is in relation to the six dimensions of wellness. Now, in terms of careers and your relationship to the world of work, what are the things you need to look at to get a rounded assessment of yourself?

Jamal: You need to reflect on things like your values, abilities, and skills.

Ashley: Shouldn't you think about your interests? And maybe also assess how you learn—your learning styles?

Mr. Romanchuk: Those are all important aspects of self-assessment. There are a couple of others that you should consider—personality and attitudes. You'll explore these topics in the material that follows.

Personality

Personality includes unique values, beliefs, traits, and behaviours that belong to you. Every individual has distinctive qualities, which make that person different from another. These personal characteristics are recognized as that individual's personality.

Much of who you are is determined by your physical makeup—set by your genetic code. You also have been affected by the environment you have grown up in, including your family and all your life experiences.

It is important to accept and understand the things you learn about yourself. Knowing your personality traits can give you a sense of what characteristics are beneficial as you plan your career. It will also give you a sense of the characteristics that may be a disadvantage in some of your pursuits. Once you recognize them, you can develop strategies to move beyond those disadvantages.



1. There are hundreds of words that can be used to describe the way a person reacts to the world. How would you describe your personality? Go to Segment 17: Personality Traits on your Student Support CD to compile a list of traits that you believe are part of your personality.

Compare your answer with the Suggested Responses at the end of the lesson.

Strengths

competencies:
abilities to do
certain things
skillfully and
with knowledge

aptitudes:
natural
abilities that
enable one to
readily learn a
particular skill

Strengths are like **competencies** or **aptitudes**. They are the things you do well, and the things you have potential to learn and do well. Self-assessment gives you the opportunity to identify your strengths.

Sometimes looking at others can help you look more clearly at yourself. What qualities do you admire and respect in other people? Some people may lack confidence or always put themselves down, so they may view their whole being through those eyes and have trouble recognizing the strengths that they have. You, however, might see the strengths that they do have. Understanding others can help you look honestly at yourself.

What are the strengths of your personality that would make you successful in particular types of careers? Are you a people person—one who finds it easy to talk to people and likes meeting new people? Do you have a determination to always do your best, no matter what the circumstances? Do you have a positive attitude that leads you to do a good job? Do you have self-confidence to know that you can take on new tasks if you have the training and the opportunity to take on the challenge? Are you good at sports? Maybe your strength lies in designing web pages or repairing bicycles? Or is your strength in academics?



2. Think of times when you have displayed the following personality traits. Select four of these traits and describe situations where you displayed them.

- attentiveness
- creativity
- easy-goingness
- reliability
- loudness
- patience
- quietness
- sense of humour
- unselfishness

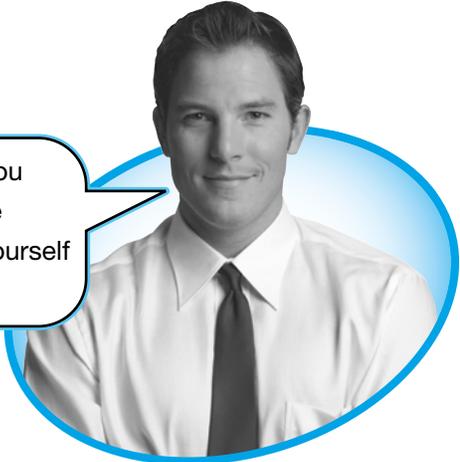
Compare your answer with the Suggested Responses at the end of the lesson.

Limitations

You are made up of all the things you are, but you are also defined by everything that you are not. Your limitations probably don't make you feel good. They might sometimes be hard to admit, but they are as much a part of you as your strengths. This is not about being down on yourself, rather it is about being realistic. Recognizing your limitations can be a valuable part of knowing who you are now and who you can be. The plus is that you can overcome many limitations by working on them.

When you assess your limitations, it's good to keep the following points in mind:

- You can try to change a limitation. If you see that you can't change it, you might decide to develop strengths in other areas of your life.
- You can shift your expectations by focusing on another area and interest of your life and become knowledgeable in that area. Sometimes shifting expectations is practical. It may, however, not always be right. You need to weigh the situation carefully. If you feel that you are being unfairly pushed to shift your expectations, you might want to give it a second thought.
- Some limitations can have a positive effect because they push you to develop strengths and acquire qualities and skills that you might not develop otherwise.



Make the most of your limitations. If you know your limitations, you can use the knowledge to your benefit. Respect yourself for what you have—your strengths.

- a. What are two of your personality traits you would like to develop further? What behaviours or actions could you practise that would help to develop these traits?
 - b. Do you have some personality traits that you think cannot be altered? Do they negatively affect your life? Explain.
4. Review the list of personality traits you compiled for question 1. Choose five that best describe you. What types of occupations would fit well with those traits?

Compare your answers with the Suggested Responses at the end of the lesson.



You might want to try some of the personality inventories that are provided online. Keep in mind that some may be more accurate and useful than others. Here are some sites you can check out:

- <http://www.alis.gov.ab.ca/pdf/careerinsite/step1/inventory.pdf>
- www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/docs/midcareer/pg704.pdf

There is no assignment for this lesson. You will use the information from this lesson to respond to the assignment for Lesson 3.

Looking Back; Looking Ahead

In this lesson, you examined ways of describing your personality and you assessed your strengths and limitations. Self-assessment is a valuable skill, which enables you to adjust to the changes you face as you move through transitions in your life. In the next lesson, you will take inventory of your skills and attitudes.

Glossary

aptitudes: natural abilities that enable one to readily learn a particular skill

competencies: abilities to do certain things skillfully and with knowledge

Suggested Responses

1. Are there any personality traits that you did not check off that you would like to develop? Are there some traits that might be strengths in some situations but weaknesses in others? In compiling your list, you should have listed the personality traits that you honestly believe you possess. Many of these terms may have personal connotations so you might have emotions tied to them. You may well have thought of other words that describe your personality traits.
2. Traits selected and the descriptions will, of course, vary. Was the situation a positive experience? Was it an appropriate trait to use in that situation? Did it surprise you or someone else? Did it help the situation or make it worse?

Many traits are positive in some situations, but may be negative in others. For example, if you chose *sense of humour* as one of your traits, you know that in many situations, humour is appropriate, but there may be some situations in which humour would be frowned upon.

3.
 - a. People often have skills and abilities they would like to improve and the same is true of personality traits. One example is people saying they would like to be more assertive. A shy person might want to work on being more comfortable socially. You will have chosen traits particular to your identity. Often to improve a trait, you must put yourself in a situation that requires you to practise the trait. Try to make it a safe and comfortable situation to begin with, but one that does provide the opportunity for you to challenge yourself. (While negative situations may be unpleasant and even painful, they can sometimes be turned into positive opportunities.)
 - b. Your answer will be personal. Sometimes personality traits are very deeply ingrained and may seem almost impossible to change. Most people believe, though, that through desire, hard work, and practice, you can modify most personality traits.
4. Each personality trait in the list would be appropriate for certain types of occupations. Being *sociable* would work well for someone in a service industry who deals with many people, such as a salesperson or waiter. A person who is *attentive* may do well in an occupation that requires close attention to detail such as air traffic control or editing. Someone who is *empathetic* might fit well in a profession such as nursing or social work.

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