Vision activity 8: Lifestyle Envy versus Job Envy

We were once working with a student who'd always admitted to us he never really knew what career he wanted. Not having any particular ambitions, he went off to university to study a subject he enjoyed. Then, two years later, he came back and told us he knew *exactly what he wanted to do with his life*. The realisation, he explained, had come in just one conversation.

We were shocked and fascinated. What could have happened in a single conversation that suddenly made his ambitions so clear?

He described the moment. He'd been talking to a classmate at uni, and she had told him she'd just got a summer job. And the more she described this job, the more envious he felt. By the end he was – to use his words – "insanely jealous." That was when he knew. He wanted that job too. He'd accidentally stumbled across the career he needed to pursue.

Ever since then, we've used this thought experiment to encourage others to put themselves in his shoes, giving them the scenario of a friend who shares some news about a job.

What kind of lucky break would make you envious?

We'd like you to try this thought experiment. In it you have to imagine a friend telling you about a new opportunity they're about to take up. They're excited, and they're describing to you what it is they're about to begin doing. And the more you listen, the more you become "insanely jealous."

Here's the crucial bit; it doesn't need to be a super-specific job; you can keep it pretty general. We don't need the whole picture to make total sense, so don't limit your thinking or stop because it doesn't sound realistic… just record exactly the kinds of things that would get the envy flowing.

Record your thoughts in the box below and use the ideas on the right if you need them:

[Grab your reader's attention with a great quote from the document or use this space to emphasize a key point. To place this text box anywhere on the page, just drag it.]	Think about: • Working hours • Working conditions • The typical working day • The place of work • The kinds of tasks and responsibilities • The rewards on offer • The further opportunities and chances that might follow • The status

Now consider all the things that have made you envious, and separate them into two groups. Group one we'll call 'lifestyle envy' – these are all the things *outside of the job itself*; the amount of time off, the pay, the holidays. The other we'll call 'job envy' – all the things that have made you envious about *doing the work itself*.

Lifestyle Envy	**Job Envy**
Insert ten lines in each column	

If you find you have the lifestyle column full and the job column empty – don't worry, this happens to us all sometimes; we can all get confused between lifestyle and job. We've seen students pursue a job or career because of the lifestyle they imagine it will give them, not because of the work itself…

- …like the student who applies to be a lawyer because they've seen legal dramas on TV and the after-work parties look glamourous and attractive…
- …or the student who wants to become an archaeologist because they imagine the travelling will be exciting, but haven't thought about the hours of back-breaking digging in the hot sun…
- …or the student applying to be a teacher because "the holidays are great."

These decisions often don't make for a happy work-life. To be truly content, it has to *be the work itself* that is meaningful and important to you. So if you've nothing in the Job Envy column have a go at the activity again, this time focussing on what kind of work would make you envious. Keep it broad and general if it helps.

What themes are important?

Ignore the left-hand column and have a look at the patterns you can see emerging in the right hand column. What qualities to do you want in a job? Try turning it into a short paragraph of just a few sentences. If you don't know how to begin try starting with, "I'd like a job that allows me to…"

And remember – focus on the nature of the work itself, not the lifestyle elements around it!