

Last week, I had a conversation with some of my students about their plans after graduation and their job prospects. Since I teach students who are training to become doctors, I was surprised to hear that most of them believed they wouldn't be able to secure their desired jobs without "outside help."

"What kind of help?" I asked, expecting them to mention connections or family friends assisting them. Instead, one student replied, "Surgery."

I was alarmed by that response. It seems that today's graduates are increasingly willing to undergo surgery to gain a competitive edge in the job market. One girl even mentioned considering surgery to increase her height. "They break your legs, insert special extending screws, and gradually expand the gap between the two ends of the bone as it regrows. You can gain at least 5 cm in height!"

At that moment, I was shocked. I admit that I am short, but I would never put myself through months of pain just to be a little taller. I don't even wear thick-soled shoes because I am not trying to hide my height!

It appears that there is a growing obsession with achieving "perfection," an unrealistic ideal. No one is born perfect, yet magazines, TV shows, and movies consistently portray thin, tall, and beautiful people as the standard. Advertisements for slimming aids, beauty treatments, and cosmetic surgery clinics further reinforce the idea that "perfection" is necessary and must be bought at any cost.

In my opinion, a person's skills, rather than their appearance, should determine their success in their chosen career.

YUZHOU, HENAN — A tragic accident in a coal mine in central China claimed the lives of 21 miners on Saturday, with another 16 trapped underground, according to government reports. The death toll rose to 26 on Sunday morning as rescuers worked tirelessly to reach the remaining 11 miners still trapped underground. However, rescue efforts were facing slim chances of success, as Du Bo, deputy chief of the rescue headquarters, explained that the miners could be buried under coal dust, making survival unlikely.

More than 2,500 tons of coal dust buried the pit after a gas leak, which further complicated the rescue operation, Du added. The gas outburst occurred at 6:03 a.m. on Saturday while 276 miners were working underground in the mine in Yuzhou City. Although 239 workers managed to escape, 21 were confirmed dead, and 16 remained trapped.

An initial investigation revealed that 173,500 cubic meters of gas leaked during the accident. Liu Wenbin, the deputy chief engineer of the company that owns the mine, was in the pit at the time of the incident. He organized the escape after sensing something was wrong with the airflow. "Around 6 a.m., I felt that something was off with the airflow in the shaft, and one of the team captains told me he had also noticed it and had already reported the issue," Liu said.

The mine is owned by Pingyu Coal & Electric Co. Ltd., a company formed by four investors, including Zhong Ping Energy Chemical Group and China Power Investment Corp.

Understanding how to make career choices and manage your career is a fundamental life skill that everyone should have. Career decisions significantly impact various aspects of life, making it essential to have the right knowledge and resources to make informed choices. Whether you are seeking a

new job, advancing in your current role, or planning for retirement, every step involves career decision-making. Utilizing good resources and seeking guidance from a career counselor can help in making well-informed choices.

Many people mistakenly believe that choosing a career is a one-time event that happens in early adulthood. However, career management is a lifelong process, and individuals continue to make important career decisions over the years. Career growth and job searching involve much more than just writing a good resume. To build a successful career, one must continuously assess interests, abilities, values, personal needs, and real-life circumstances. Given the significant amount of time spent at work and its impact on daily life, it is crucial to be fully informed before making career decisions.

There are thousands of career options available. Resources like *The Dictionary of Occupational Titles* (U.S.) and *The National Occupational Classification* (Canada) list over 20,000 job titles, meaning there are many opportunities people may not even be aware of. Exploring different career paths allows individuals to discover roles that align with their skills and interests.

Matching self-awareness with an understanding of career options is key. Once individuals gain insight into their strengths, values, and preferences, they can combine that knowledge with labor market research to find careers that suit them best. After making a well-informed decision, the next step is to take action by acquiring the necessary education, skills, and experience. Additionally, implementing effective job search strategies can help secure the desired position.

Investing time in understanding career needs, researching options, and refining job search skills with the help of reliable career resources is a powerful step toward a successful and fulfilling professional future.

Astronauts on shorter shuttle missions often work long hours, with schedules so tight that even break times are used to complete tasks. However, such a demanding routine is not suitable for long-term missions on the International Space Station (ISS), where crew members typically spend at least three months in space. To maintain a sense of normalcy, ISS astronauts follow a five-day work schedule with weekends off. These rest days allow them to relax, catch up on household tasks, and stay connected with family and friends through email, internet phone calls, and private video conferences.

Although astronauts cannot attend a baseball game or watch a movie in a theater while in orbit, they still have access to many familiar activities. Before a mission, their family and friends prepare collections of personal photos, messages, videos, and reading materials for them to enjoy while floating 370 kilometers above Earth. During their time on the ISS, astronauts also receive care packages containing CDs, books, magazines, photos, and letters. Since early 2010, internet access has been available on the ISS, allowing astronauts to browse the web during their free time.

Beyond these common sources of entertainment, astronauts also take pleasure in the unique experience of living in space. Many say that one of the most relaxing activities is simply looking out the window to admire the vastness of the universe and the breathtaking view of Earth's land and oceans.

Dogs have long been used to detect explosives and drugs, but a new study suggests they can also help identify lung and breast cancer. According to researchers in *Integrative Cancer Therapies*, trained household dogs can detect early-stage lung and breast cancers by smelling patients' breath samples.

Scientists have discovered that cancer cells release molecules different from those of healthy cells, and a dog's highly sensitive nose may be able to detect these unique scents. In the study, five dogs were trained by a professional instructor to distinguish between breath samples from healthy individuals and those with cancer. The dogs were taught to sit or lie down in front of cancerous samples while ignoring non-cancerous ones, using a food-reward method.

After training, the researchers tested the dogs' ability to identify cancer patients from a new set of breath samples, which included 55 lung cancer patients, 31 breast cancer patients, and 83 healthy individuals. The results were remarkable—the dogs correctly identified cancer patients in about 90% of cases, even in early stages of the disease.

Lead researcher McCulloch expressed hope for early cancer detection based on these findings. The team plans to study the breath composition of cancer patients further and potentially develop an electronic device to replicate the dogs' abilities. "A dog's nose is incredibly powerful, detecting odors 10,000 to 100,000 times better than a human nose," McCulloch explained. "This research proves there is something significant here, and I hope it encourages further studies."

Friends and Buddies

This program is planned for teenagers who have special needs with the goal of meeting within a community with other peers. The purpose of the program is that it will lead to a better understanding of friendships. Gym, Swim, Surprise Guest, and Pizza are included. Ages 12-18, numbers of members are limited. Contact: Gloria Bass. This program is held 2 Fridays per month. Fees: \$65/\$85

Club Saturday Swim

This program is available to anyone aged 5-14 who is challenged by mental, physical, or emotional trouble. The program will be held each Saturday afternoon, 12:00-12:30 pm or 12:30-1:00 pm. Fees: \$136/\$260

Sibshops (Ages 10-13)

Sibshops is a program for siblings of children with challenges. It includes group activities and talk treatment ways with the focus on improving sibling relationships and whole family happiness. Location: Hope Church, Wilton CT. Wednesday: 4:00-5:00 pm. Fees: \$50/\$65

Banana Splits

Banana Splits is an educational support group for children in family trouble. Children aged 9-13 will have the opportunity to meet other children whose parents have separated or divorced, learn to recognize feelings, think of healthy coping skills, and have a place to share their struggles through verbal, physical, and artistic experiences. Location: Hope Church, Wilton CT. Tuesday: 4:30-5:30 pm. Fees: \$50/\$65

Every time I lost a tooth, I would put it under my pillow at night. The next morning, I would wake up to find two coins replacing my tooth. Then I'd wonder about the tooth fairy all day.

"Mom, where do you think the tooth fairy lives? What does she do with the teeth she collects?"

My mom said she didn't know. She only knew that the tooth fairy took the tooth away while we were sleeping and left us some money under our pillow. But I wanted to find out. So I thought it was a good thing that I would lose another tooth. The plan was to stay up all night and ask the tooth fairy when she showed up.

That night, I lay quietly in my bed, growing sleepy as the night went on. Moments later, I felt that someone was close to me. Through my half-opened eyes, I didn't see any feet, but I knew it was the tooth fairy. I watched her run around and fly right out of my room. She was wearing a shiny green dress. After she left, I immediately felt under my pillow. There were two coins. I had never even felt my pillow move. I wondered if she used magic.

As I got older, I learned from my teachers that the tooth fairy didn't exist. It was just a mythical figure of early childhood. I kind of thought it was, but how could I see the tooth fairy fly that night?

Then one night, my mom came into my room to check on me. The moonlight was bright that night, and it shone through my window right on her shiny green nightdress. Right then, I knew deep down that my mom was the tooth fairy.

One day, an old woman was traveling alone in the mountains. Suddenly she saw something shining in the stream. When she came close, she found it was a precious stone. She put the stone into her bag and went on with her trip.

The next day, the old woman met a young man, who was also a traveler in the mountains. The young man looked very hungry, so the old woman opened her bag to share her food. The hungry traveler saw the precious stone and asked carefully, "The stone is beautiful. Would you like to give it to me?"

"Sure. Why not?" the woman said, and handed the stone to him.

The young man left happily with the stone. He knew it was worth enough to give him wealth for a lifetime. But a few days later, he came back to return the stone to the woman.

"I've been thinking," he said. "I know how valuable the stone is, but I give it back and hope that you can give me something even more precious. Give me what you have within your bag."

The woman opened her bag. It was almost empty. She looked at the young man and smiled, "I have nothing special in my bag, but I do have something precious—the joy of giving!"

The young man felt ashamed and left silently.

The \$11 billion self-help industry is built on the idea that you should turn negative thoughts like "I never do anything right" into positive ones like "I can succeed." But was positive thinking advocate Norman Vincent Peale right? Is there power in positive thinking?

Researchers in Canada just published a study in the journal *Psychological Science* that says trying to get people to think more positively can actually have the opposite effect: it can simply highlight how unhappy they are.

The study's authors, Joanne Wood and John Lee of the University of Waterloo and Elaine Perunovic of the University of New Brunswick, begin by citing older research showing that when people get

feedback which they believe is overly positive, they actually feel worse, not better. If you tell your friend who is slow to learn that he has the potential of an Einstein, it may not encourage him at all.

In one 1990s experiment, a team including psychologist Joel Cooper of Princeton asked participants to write essays opposing funding for the disabled. When the essayists were later praised for their sympathy, they felt even worse about what they had written.

In this experiment, Wood, Lee, and Perunovic measured 68 students' self-esteem. The participants were then asked to write down their thoughts and feelings for four minutes. Every 15 seconds, one group of students heard a bell. When it rang, they were supposed to tell themselves, "I am lovable."

Those with low self-esteem didn't feel better after the forced self-affirmation. In fact, their moods turned significantly darker than those of members of the control group, who weren't urged to think positive thoughts.

The paper provides support for newer forms of psychotherapy that urge people to accept their negative thoughts and feelings rather than fight them. In the fighting, we not only often fail but can make things worse. Meditation techniques, in contrast, can teach people to put their shortcomings into a larger, more realistic viewpoint. Call it the power of negative thinking.

She was 6 years old when I first met her on the beach near where I live. She insisted on talking to me.

"I'm building," she said.

"I see that. What is it?" I asked, not caring.

"Oh, I don't know, I just like the feel of sand."

That sounds good, I thought, and slipped off my shoes.

A sandpiper glided by.

"My mom says sandpipers come to bring us joy."

"Good-bye joy," I muttered to myself, "Hello pain," and turned to walk on. I was depressed; my life seemed completely out of balance.

"What's your name?" She wouldn't give up.

"Robert," I answered.

"Mine's Wendy... I'm 6. Why are you so quiet?"

I turned to her and shouted: "Because my mother died!"

"Oh," she said quietly, "then this is a bad day."

"Yes," I said, "and yesterday and the day before and—oh, go away!"

"Did it hurt?" she asked.

"Did what hurt?" I was annoyed with her, with myself.

"When she died?"

"Of course it hurt!" I replied angrily, misunderstanding.

A month after that, when I next went to the beach, she wasn't there. Feeling guilty, ashamed, I went up to the cottage and knocked at the door. A young woman answered.

"Hello," I said. "I'm Robert Peterson. I missed your little girl today and wondered where she was."

"Wendy died last week, Mr. Peterson. She had leukemia. Maybe she didn't tell you."

I had to catch my breath, saying nothing.

"She seemed so much better here and had a lot of what she called happy days. But the last few weeks, she declined rapidly..."

"She left something for you... if only I could find it," she said. "Could you wait a moment while I look?"

It was a drawing in bright colors—a yellow beach, a blue sea, and a brown bird. Underneath was carefully printed: **A SANDPIPER TO BRING YOU JOY.**

I took Wendy's mother in my arms. "I'm so sorry," I muttered over and over, and we wept together. But then we looked at the picture of the sandpiper and slowly both of us began to smile, remembering the lesson that Wendy had left us.

Even when life seems sad, joy can be found in the smallest of things. We should take time to seek out these little joys in life and live for the love that we have for each other.

An allowance is an important tool for teaching kids how to budget, save, and make their own decisions. Children remember and learn from mistakes when their own dollars are lost or spent foolishly.

How large an allowance is appropriate? Experts say there is no right amount. Actual amounts differ from region to region and from family to family.

To set an appropriate allowance for your child, work up a weekly budget. Allow for entertainment expenditures such as movies and snacks. Next, include everyday expenses such as lunch money, bus fare, and school supplies. "If you make the child responsible for these bills," says Josephine Swanson, a consumer specialist, "he or she will learn to budget for necessary expenditures."

Finally, add some extra money to make saving possible. If you can, keep your child's allowance in line with that of his friends. A child whose purchasing power falls way below his peers' can feel left out.

It can be tough, but avoid excusing your children when they make a mistake with their allowance. When Brooke Stephens was ten and growing up in Jacksonville, her mother gave her \$5 a week, \$1.75 of which was for bus fare and lunch. "If you lose your money," Brooke's mother told her, "you walk home."

One week the girl spent all her allowance in a candy store, then she called home for a ride. "Mom made me walk home," recalls Stephens, now a financial planner in Brooklyn. "At first I was angry. But I finally realized that she was trying to teach me an important lesson."

Experts advise that an allowance should not be tied directly to a child's daily chores. Kids should help around the house not because they get paid for it but because they share responsibilities as members of a family. You might, however, pay a child for doing extra jobs at home, which can develop his or her initiative.

Shyness is the cause of much unhappiness for a great many people. Shy people are anxious and self-conscious; that is, they are overly concerned with their own appearance and actions. Worrisome thoughts are constantly occurring in their minds: What kind of impression am I making? Do they like me? Do I sound stupid? Am I wearing unattractive clothes?

It is obvious that such uncomfortable feelings must affect people unfavorably. A person's self-concept is reflected in the way he or she behaves, and the way a person behaves affects other people's reactions. In general, the way people think about themselves has a deep effect on all areas of their lives. Shy people have low self-esteem, are likely to be passive, and are easily influenced by others. They need reassurance that they are doing "the right thing." Shy people are very sensitive to criticism. It makes them feel inferior. They also find it difficult to be pleased by praise because they believe they are unworthy of it. A shy person may respond to praise with a statement like this one: "You're just saying that to make me feel good. I know it's not true."

It is clear that, while self-awareness is a healthy quality, overdoing it is harmful. Can shyness be completely eliminated, or at least reduced? Fortunately, people can overcome shyness with determination. It is important for people to accept their weaknesses as well as their strengths. For example, it is not fair for them to label themselves as inferior—they have to be realistic. Living with unrealistic expectations leads to feelings of inferiority. Each one of us has our own characteristics. We are interesting in our own personal ways. The better we understand ourselves, the easier it becomes to live up to our potential for a rich and fulfilling life.

A new Canada Prize for the Arts and Creativity could be in place by 2010, with large cash prizes for emerging artists in dance, music, theatre, and visual arts.

The prize is the idea of Tony Gagliano and David Pecaut, founders of the Luminato festival, who were able to convince the federal government to back it. The federal budget has allocated \$25 million to support the awards, which are open to emerging artists. The aim is to create a prize that has the prestige of a Nobel Prize.

"When you think about the major prizes of the world — the Nobel Prize in Sweden, the Kyoto Prizes in Japan, or the Booker Prize in the U.K. — they bring great honor and opportunity to the countries that award them," Pecaut said. "The idea here is that every year, the Canada Prizes will be awarded to the very best promising emerging artists around the world in those four fields."

A jury of international experts would judge the 12 finalists, who would come to Canada and perform or show their work in public to win the Canada Prizes. The performances would be televised, allowing Canadians across the country to see them.

The federal government liked the idea of such an international prize that would advance Canada's brand, draw tourists, and attract arts professionals from around the world. For the Canadian arts community, one of the greatest challenges is connecting to the international arts world to come up with co-productions, foreign investment, and touring opportunities.

A group is working toward establishing the prize by 2010, with potential for semi-final rounds to take place around the same time as the Vancouver Olympic Games. "Thirty or forty years from now, the future outstanding dancers and performers will look back and say, 'I broke out on the world scene in Toronto — that's where I was discovered.'"

Looking good, feeling good

Born to a model mom and a suit maker dad, fashion was actually in my blood. I always had a strong desire to dress in a certain way and to stand out from the crowd.

I made my own toys when I was a young child and sewed my first skirt at just 10 years old. A friend's mother took one look at my skirt and told me that I should be a patternmaker. In high school, I started making my own clothes, mostly changing other things because I never liked anything how it was when I bought it. During the last two years of school, I worked part-time for a small business that made hand-painted silk clothing and bags. The owner became the teacher who got me into design in the first place. Another useful bit of work experience then came when I worked at a showroom during fashion week and found it very exciting. From there, I worked at a top clothing store while I got my business started.

For my business, I started out with the idea that everything I did would be hand-made and one-of-a-kind, specially made for one individual who hopefully had the same tastes as me. Every morning I jumped out of bed, went to my studio, and worked on my projects. This just showed how enthusiastic I felt about my work. And at night I even dreamed of new designs!

Fashion design is an art. What I mean is that it's something close to you and something you can touch and feel, and actually interact with. My advice to any young person who wants to be a fashion designer is to get the basic skills early on, such as sewing and pattern-making. Even if you end up specializing, it's really important to understand all aspects of design in order to make high-quality clothes.

Also, if you dream of having your own clothing line, the best thing to do is start wearing your clothes. You have to try and do this because that's the way you're going to develop something that's all yours and unlike anyone else's. I passionately believe that the right clothing can make people feel better and give them more confidence.

Microsoft just finished a three-month experiment operating an underwater data center. A server rack with the power of about 300 PCs was placed into a water-tight steel container and lowered into the ocean off the coast of central California.

The unusual experiment was launched because current data centers are unpleasantly inefficient. They're built where energy and land are cheap (not close to where people actually live), and they waste so much energy cooling their massive computers. The ocean can solve those problems. The cold ocean floor sufficiently cools the computing components inside the pod. And since most people live near the ocean, placing data centers underwater could potentially increase the speed at which customers could access the information stored in Microsoft's cloud.

The experiment was so successful that Microsoft operated the underwater data center for 75 days longer than it had planned to. The next step is to get a larger pod, with about four times the computing power, under the ocean for testing. Unlike the first experiment, the next pod will also be equipped with turbines, which will transform the ocean's currents into electricity. It's not clear when, if ever, underwater data centers will become a possible product. "Our first experiment was like dipping our pinkie toe in the water, and now we're going for the big toe," said Lee, corporate vice president of Microsoft Research.

Microsoft is still analyzing the environmental impacts of the study. Data centers are both hot and loud, which could have damaging effects on ocean life. Microsoft found that the noise its underwater data center produced was drowned out by nearby shrimp and crabs. The data centers are also built from recyclable materials, and Microsoft believes that the total carbon footprint of underwater data centers will be "dramatically lower" than current land-based centers.

Given the growth in the cloud, industry analysts believe that most of the world's data centers have yet to be built. But building a data center takes at least two years—an eternity in the fast-developing tech industry. As a result, Microsoft builds its data centers with the future in mind, installing far more computing power and space than it currently needs.

Lee believes that going underwater can shift the building of data centers from construction projects to manufacturing jobs. "What if we could mass-produce these pods on an assembly line?" he thought. "We could deliver a data center, from conception to operation, in 90 days. That's dramatically different than what's happening today."

There was a king who gave his daughter a beautiful diamond necklace. The necklace was stolen, and his people in the kingdom searched everywhere but could not find it. So the king asked to search for it and put a reward of \$50,000 for anyone who found it.

One day, a clerk was walking home along a river when he saw something shining in the river. When he looked, he saw the diamond necklace. He decided to try and catch it to get the \$50,000 reward.

He put his hand in the river and tried to catch the necklace, but somehow missed it and didn't catch it. He took his hand out and looked again, and the necklace was still there. He tried again.

But strangely, he still missed the necklace! He came out and started walking away, feeling sad. Just then, an old man walking by saw him and asked him what was the matter. The clerk didn't want to share the secret with him, thinking he might take the necklace for himself, so he refused to tell him anything.

The old man could see this man was troubled. He again asked the clerk to tell him the problem and promised that he would not tell anyone about it. The clerk told him about the necklace and how he tried and tried to catch it, but kept failing.

The old man then told him that perhaps he should try looking upward, toward the branches of the tree, instead of in the river. The clerk looked up and, true enough, the necklace was hanging on the branch of a tree. He had been trying to take a reflection of the real necklace all this time.

Last week, I spoke with some of my students about their plans after graduation and what kind of job prospects they expected. As I teach students who are training to become doctors, I was surprised to hear that most of them felt they wouldn't be able to secure the jobs they wanted without "outside help." "What kind of help?" I asked, expecting them to say that they needed a relative or family friend to assist them. One of them replied, "Surgery." I was shocked by that response. It seems that today's graduates are increasingly willing to undergo surgery to gain an advantage in the job market. One girl mentioned she was considering surgery to increase her height. "They break your legs, put in special extending screws, and slowly expand the gap between the two ends of the bone as it re-grows. You can get at least 5 cm taller!"

At that point, I was taken aback. While I am short, I don't think I would go through months of pain just to be a few centimeters taller. I don't even wear shoes with thick soles because I'm not trying to hide my height!

It seems there's a growing trend of wanting "perfection," an ideal that doesn't really exist. No one is born perfect, yet magazines, TV shows, and movies often depict thin, tall, and beautiful people as the standard. Advertisements for weight loss products, beauty treatments, and cosmetic surgery fill the pages of newspapers, creating the notion that "perfection" is something you must buy at any cost. In my opinion, a person's skills, not their appearance, should determine their success in their chosen career.