I am not yet working with students, so for this assignment, I decided to take a survey I haven’t yet taken or used myself to get a feel for it and reflect on how I plan to use surveys in my future practice.

I took the Self-Survey for the College Bound. The results weren’t surprising to me — but I’m an adult who has spent quite a lot of time reflecting on my strengths and flaws! I can imagine that high-school-me would have been surprised at the lower scores in categories like Tenacity (12) and Emotional Vocabulary (12). Adult-me knows that the survey is absolutely correct that a lack of tenacity and emotional intelligence are real personal weaknesses of mine.

Taking the survey and seeing the way the results are presented also made me realize how important it is that students get some guidance on how to interpret their results. That can either come from a detailed written guide or from a counselor. But even if there’s a good guide on how to interpret the results, I think it’s still useful for counselors to go over the results with their students verbally. Basically, the survey is a conversation starter. Walking through the results together and asking questions about them is a way to get the student talking and reflecting on themselves, and for the counselor to get to know the person behind the survey result numbers.

I can certainly imagine using this survey in my practice as a way to get to know students during the very first stages of meeting together. I plan to look through other surveys as well. But that said, I do not think I will use many surveys with most of my students. I will probably have one or two surveys that I do with everyone at the beginning of the list-building process, but beyond that I don’t think that more surveys is necessarily better.

This is simply because I worry that seeing a survey result might narrow their self-concept too much — if you see a score on a page, it’s easy to take that as the whole truth instead of just one facet of it. I don’t want a student to define themselves by a survey result.That said, I do think surveys absolutely have their place. Especially for students who are struggling to define themselves at all, or who think they have no preferences or interests or anything along those lines, surveys are fantastic. Surveys are essentially lists of guided reflection questions, and students who struggle to reflect on themselves can definitely be helped by surveys. Which surveys I have which student take will depend on what the student needs help reflecting on.

Overall, I liked many of the surveys and worksheets on Steven Antonoff’s website, and will certainly be adding at least a few of them to my counseling arsenal. I also plan to look for additional surveys as well, especially around academic fields of interest and non-academic aspects of college life.