

Career Counseling Case Study: Jamie Watson

Jamie Watson is a 21-year-old female from Covina, California. Jamie is a high school friend of my girlfriend and our first career counseling session was only our second time meeting each other. She is a non-traditional college student in that she spent a semester attending Citrus College, but has yet to return to take more courses. In our first meeting, Jamie and I went over the “Career Counseling Intake Interview” and the “Career Puzzle.” The intake interview and career puzzle provided many insights into Jamie’s personhood and where she wanted to go throughout our journey together.

During the intake interview Jamie shared her goal for our sessions, her schooling plans, her timeline, her major, and much more. Some of Jamie’s goals for our sessions were: learning more about herself, finding direction, and beginning to look for a career. All of these goals led me to believe that Jamie was in the “Exploration” stage of Super’s theory of Career Development. Identifying this in Jamie helped me guide her throughout our sessions in that we needed to crystallize, clarify, specify, and implement some career aspirations. When I asked her about schooling plans, Jamie replied, “This is the part I get stuck at.” She said she wants to go back to school, but gets anxiety about doing so. I guided Jamie into describing her anxiety a little more and she described the reasons behind it are that she does not want to commit to something and have it end up being a waste of time. The ironic thing that I did not mention to Jamie at the time is that she is wasting time by freezing and not taking steps toward her goals right now. This anxiety led me to believe that Jamie was still in the “Developing Purpose” stage of Chickering’s theory of Adult Development. Identifying this in Jamie helped me guide her throughout our sessions in that we needed to be intentional, assess her interests and opinions,

clarify her goals, encourage her to persist despite obstacles (such as anxiety), and formulate plans for action.

When I asked her about a timeline for finding a career, Jamie replied, “I want to be on my path as soon as possible.” At another point in the intake interview Jamie shared that her major was Business but she wanted to change it to English. When asked about the change she said she chose Business because she wanted to have her own business, whereas English she chose because she liked to read and felt more passionate about it. In her semester at Citrus College, Jamie did not enjoy her Business classes and her grades were not as good as the ones she received in English. Her Business grades from that semester are actually one reason why Jamie is hesitant to return to Citrus College because she ended up on academic probation.

While inquiring about her job history, I guided Jamie in describing one thing she liked and one thing she disliked about her past positions. Her first job as an administrative assistant at a lumber yard was enjoyable in that it was easy and required little effort, but not enjoyable in that it was a “9 to 5” job and there were sometimes nothing to do. The pros and cons of that job were similar to the pros and cons she experienced as an intern for a record label. Another of Jamie’s jobs, a server at a vegetarian restaurant, was good because her friends worked with her, but not good because the manager was never around. Lastly, her current position at In-N-Out is likeable because of the pay, the people, and the company, but dislikable because the “hours suck” and she does not want to flip burgers for the rest of her life.

At another point during the intake interview I asked Jamie what her “dream” job would be. She said her dream job would be to own a used bookstore. Her response here reminded me of her desire to major in Business and I noticed the first theme of Jamie’s personality: she is an entrepreneur. When asked what she wanted to be while growing up Jamie said she wanted to be

a teacher. When asked about the pressure to move in a certain direction, she described a feeling in her self and an outside feeling (from family and extended family) that she should go back to school. Jamie's goal after our sessions is to talk to a counselor at Citrus College and enroll in four classes.

In the second part of our first meeting Jamie and I went over the career puzzle. The interesting thing about the puzzle is that it actually became puzzling for Jamie and I to fill it out. She struggled to find words and examples for her interests, skills, strengths, personality, values, environment, and location. We did compile enough information to complete the puzzle, but I left our first meeting knowing that in future sessions I should bring lists of words, phrases, and examples; anything to spark Jamie's imagination and help her put words to her self.

Jamie shared that her interests were in music, cooking, trying new things, and reading. Her skills were reading aloud to people, doing accents, having a random collection of knowledge, and being well read. She described her personality as fun, outgoing, happy, spontaneous, being a good listener, and having a good memory. Her strengths were risk taking, multi-tasking, working with people, taking initiative, and being friendly/approachable. Jamie shared that she values having something to show for her hard work (not just money). She also values having days full of possibilities and doing something that matters and makes herself happy. The work environment Jamie wants to work in is one that has social interaction, new people, a present/available supervisor, support, accountability, friendly people, fast-paced and busy, and freedom (no micromanaging). The location she wants to work in would be urban (fast-paced, big, always something new), not in California, and maybe in Philadelphia. Though the end result of the career puzzle provided insights, the process could have gone smoother.

Knowing that Jamie needed help putting words to herself, I took advantage of handouts passed out in class and administered them to her in our second session. The handouts touched on personality, values, ideal work environment, abilities, and transferable skills. Using the personality checklist, Jamie ranked the top 10 characters she saw in herself. They are (in order from 1 to 10) understanding, open-minded, friendly, trustworthy, intelligent, clever, realistic, humorous, easy-going, and spontaneous. Two of these, friendly and spontaneous, matched up with what Jamie reported on the career puzzle under strengths and personality, respectively. The other 8 characteristics will help Jamie voice more of who she is in a cover letter, resume, and in an interview. It will also aid her in her goal throughout our sessions of knowing herself more.

Using the values checklist, Jamie ranked her top 10 values. This will help her know her priorities during career decision-making and will help her find a career that matches what her life is “anchored” on. Her values (in order from 1 to 10): challenge, cooperation, creative, equality, faith, independence, knowledge, love, loyalty, and pleasure. Two of these, challenge and independence, matched up with what Jamie reported on the career puzzle. The value of challenge matched her interest in trying new things and her strength in risk taking. The value of independence matched her desire for freedom and no micromanaging in a work environment.

On another handout, “Your Ideal Work Environment,” Jamie scored on a continuum how she felt about 20 working conditions and job environments. Nine conditions she felt strongest about were the following: considerable creativity and innovation required, high risk/high challenge, work requiring attention to detail, high level of responsibility making decisions, work that contains a lot of surprises, work that involves contact with a wide variety of people, working hours are flexible, work permits casual attire, and lots of travel. Four of the described work environments were related to the career puzzle, the personality checklist, and/or the values

checklist. Considerable creativity and innovation required was related to the creative value Jamie has. High risk/high challenge related to Jamie's value of challenge and her career puzzle interest in trying new things and strength in risk taking. Work that contains a lot of surprises related to what Jamie reported on the personality checklist and the personality portion of the career puzzle as spontaneity. Lastly, work that involves contact with a wide variety of people related to what she reported as social contact and new people under work environment in the career puzzle.

Another handout, an assessment of abilities, helped Jamie get to know herself more too. The handout used a 1-5 scale to score one's level of ability. Jamie scored 5's, the highest score meaning "Definite, strong ability in this area," on the following abilities: speaking with someone one-on-one, listening and understanding verbal information, knowledge of when and how to dress appropriately, working alone, ability to 'think on your feet,' ability to criticize constructively, and work under pressure. Two of these, ability to 'think on your feet' and work under pressure, were similar to previous reports. The ability to 'think on your feet' is similar to Jamie's desire to do work that contains a lot of surprises and what she reported on the personality checklist and the personality portion of the career puzzle as spontaneity. Working under pressure is similar to Jamie's desire to do work that contains high risk/high challenge, her value of challenge, and her career puzzle interest in trying new things and strength in risk taking.

The last handout Jamie and I worked on was transferrable skills. On a scale of 1-7 she ranked her transferable skills dealing with *things* and transferable skills dealing with *people*. Concerning things, under the category of "Skills With Objects," Jamie scored her two 7's. One was on washing, cleaning, or preparing and the other was on handling or expediting. Concerning people, under the category of "With Individuals," Jamie scored her three 7's. One was on taking

instructions, serving, or helping. Another was on communicating well in conversation, in person, or on the phone. The third was on communicating well in writing.

Our third session centered on *taking* the Strong Interest Inventory. Before taking the assessment I had Jamie casually look at the Holland Occupational Themes Inventory on a handout. Through the Holland she checked off some themes inside the categories and then stepped back and ranked three categories she felt most described “her.” I wanted Jamie to list her top three categories before the Strong listed them for her so we could compare the two later on. She listed (in order) Social, Investigative, and Conventional as her categories. After the Holland I introduced the Strong to her as an assessment tool that could guide us deeper into learning about Jamie. I told her the assessment was simply seeing what she was interested in.

After I received Jamie’s Strong results we met for a fourth time. This session centered on *reviewing* the assessment’s results. We began by reading aloud the first page of the results, “How the strong can help you.” I then reminded her that the assessment is a guide; it is something of a starting point, something that could satisfy Jamie’s goal she listed in our first session as beginning to look for a career.

Jamie’s General Occupational Themes were Artistic, Social, and Investigative. However, Enterprising scored the same as Investigative, but was listed below it. Compared to what Jamie reported on the Holland (SIC), Jamie’s ASI (and E) on the Strong was pretty similar (the S and the I being on both). We took a look at each theme, considering how Jamie fit or did not fit the listed interests, work activities, potential skills, and values for each theme. Under Artistic, Jamie expressed her interest in art, culture, music, creativity, and independence. With Social, Jamie said she was interested in people, helping, caring, listening, and serving others. Under Investigative she reported her interest in writing, independence, curiosity, and learning. Lastly,

we looked at Enterprising because it scored similar to Investigative and Jamie confirmed her interest in business, entrepreneurship, and risk taking.

We then looked at her top five interest areas and her three areas of least interest, discussing why they might have shown up. Jamie's top five interest areas were (in order): teaching and education, writing and mass communication, performing arts, counseling and helping, and mathematics. She said teaching and education has always been present in her life as something she wants to do or something an extended family member does and wants her to do as well. Writing and mass communication could have shown up because she enjoys journaling, while performing arts could have shown up because she enjoys music concerts and used to perform short plays for friends and family. Jamie shared that counseling and helping may be there because she has that kind of relationship with her friends, while mathematics may be there because she has always been good at science and math in school. For her areas of least interest, the first one plainly did not interest her (law), the second was because she is bad with money (finance and investing), and third was because of conflict and fear (politics and public speaking).

Next, Jamie and I explored her "Top Ten Strong Occupations." They were (in order): elementary school teacher, special education teacher, translator, speech pathologist, librarian, technical writer, occupational therapist, foreign language teacher, ESL instructor, and musician. I first pointed out to her that the majority of these occupations dealt with language, education or both. We then went through the first five occupations and brainstormed "What is it about this occupation that relates to who you are?" With elementary school teacher, Jamie shared that she enjoys being in touch with her "inner child" and that this occupation would allow her to do so. Both the special education teacher and the speech pathologist occupations would allow Jamie to help the less fortunate. She shared about her cousin who has a stutter and how she feels bad for

the way her cousin is treated because of it. I informed her that these positions and similar ones would allow her to stick up for and assist the marginalized in our society. The occupation of translator showed up, Jamie said, because of her desire to help people understand a culture that is not their own. Lastly, the librarian occupation showed up because she loves books; she loves reading them, collecting them, and sharing them. We then explored the occupations of dissimilar interest. In order, they were: athletic trainer, physical education teacher, medical illustrator, mathematician, and firefighter. I pointed out to Jamie that the theme most of these occupations share is that of physical activity and science.

After occupations, we explored the personal style preferences. Jamie's style was listed as so: she is likely to prefer working with people, she seems to prefer to learn through lectures and books, she probably is comfortable both leading by example and taking charge, she may be comfortable taking some risks, and she probably enjoys both team roles and independent roles. All of the scores were listed in the midrange though, so that may be why the language describing her preferences includes the words 'likely,' 'seems,' 'probably,' and 'may.' I informed Jamie to use this portion of the Strong even more as a loose guide than the other portions because her scores were all midrange.

To help Jamie in her goal of finding a starting point in the career search, we looked deeper into the sections on college majors for each theme, as well as campus organizations and activities, internships and job settings, college courses, and educational preparation. Looking at this information helped Jamie gain concrete information on what she could do to explore her interests further and even pursue a specific career. I also showed Jamie the "O*NET" website which would allow her to search by one, two, or three themes to find specific jobs and careers

that would fit her well. After debriefing the Strong and looking at the website, I had Jamie take the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and told her we would discuss it in our next session.

During our fifth and final meeting Jamie and I went over the Myers-Briggs and concluded our career counseling by looking into next steps. On the Myers-Briggs, Jamie came out as an INFP (Introvert, Intuitive, Feeling, and Perceptive). With Introversion, she has reflection, depth of focus, and a personalized perspective. With Intuition, she sees ‘the big picture’ and patterns, she is optimistic about future possibilities, and she identifies future trends. With Feeling, she knows the inner motivations of people, she is sensitive to the needs of the individual, and she has depth of self-knowledge and values. Lastly, with Perceiving she has the ability to act in the moment, she is good with change, and she has the ability to land on her feet. However, under pressure Jamie may isolate, blame her self, get depressed or shut down. She may be overwhelmed by too many possibilities, fantasize about the future and be overly optimistic, and complexify issues and make too many connections. Jamie may also become self-serving and self-doubting, become passive and aggressive, as well as manipulative. Lastly, she may become ungrounded, spin out of control, and be indecisive.

The prayer for an INFP is: “God, help me to finish everything I sta...” Some characteristics associated with an INFP are their enthusiasm, loyalty, care for learning, ideas, language, and projects of their own. They put too much on their plate yet somehow get it all done and are little concerned with possessions or physical surroundings. The cognitive style of being an NFP is being an advocate for individual rights, a motivator for change, multitasking with people, facilitating process, creating new possibilities, and counseling for change.

To conclude our career counseling, Jamie and I discussed some next steps. I told her to follow through with her initial goal of meeting with a counselor at Citrus College and signing up

for four classes. I also told her to explore the O*NET website as well as the college majors for each Strong theme, as well as the campus organizations/activities, internships/job settings, college courses, and educational preparation. I guided her into simply signing up and getting back into school while exploring possibilities, then trying things out. In all, I think I helped Jamie in her “Exploration” stage of Super’s theory of Career Development. I helped her crystallize, clarify, specify, and implement some career aspirations. Also, I think I helped Jamie in her “Developing Purpose” stage of Chickering’s theory of Adult Development. I helped her be intentional, assess her interests and opinions, clarify her goals, encourage her to persist despite obstacles (ie anxiety), and formulate plans for action. Lastly, I gave Jamie a folder of all the handouts and information we went over. This collection as well as our five sessions, I believe, achieved the goals Jamie set at our first session: to know more about herself, to find direction, and to begin looking for a career.