

Using theories in career practice

Julia Yates

Professor of Organisational Psychology

City St Georges, University of London

Plan for the session

Theory-driven practice

What value do theories add to career practice

How can they be used

Theories in practice- some new ideas

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy

Career Inaction Theory

Kaleidoscope Career Model

Career Construction Theory

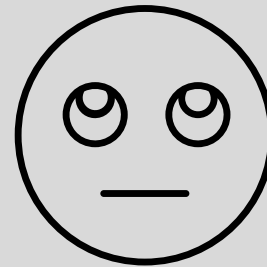
What's your relationship with theories?



I love them – I
can't get
enough!



I like them – I
use them
sometimes



I like them but
I don't really
use them



I vaguely
remember them
but never use
them

Career development theories in practice

Humans are theory-building creatures

Theories help us to make sense of the world

Career development theories *should* be really useful for us

But they aren't well used in practice



**What value can career theories
add to career practice?**

Career theories in practice

- 30 career consultants, all self-confessed theory-geeks
- In-depth interviews, thematic analysis
- Asked to talk about how they use career theories in their practice, what theories they use, and what value they feel the theories add



How did these colleagues use theories in practice?

As a working hypothesis that allowed them to understand their clients more quickly and more deeply

To guide questions

As a framework for career education

Shared explicitly with clients to normalise (*it's a thing*) and to help them understand themselves better

For reflection

Theory-informed career practice

Theories can be used to
inform your understanding
or can be shared directly
with clients



'I saw that little smile come on his face – he liked that, knowing that he fitted into a theory [...] it gives them a bit of affirmation'

'confidence that I know what I'm talking about – I'm a professional'

Greater confidence

'they can make you understand that something isn't down to you – it's just where the client is'

More effective practice

'listen in a deep way [...] which allows you to have a better and deeper conversation about it'

Deeper understanding

theories 'offer a language to help people articulate what they are feeling'

So if theories are so useful...why aren't we all using them?

Plenty of reasons proposed in the literature

- There are too many theories

- They aren't well taught

- They aren't suitable for the UK context – short interviews, group work

- You can't use them with young people

- It's more important to engage with LMI / data

But my participants told a different story

- They are hard to understand

- There is no guidance for how to use them

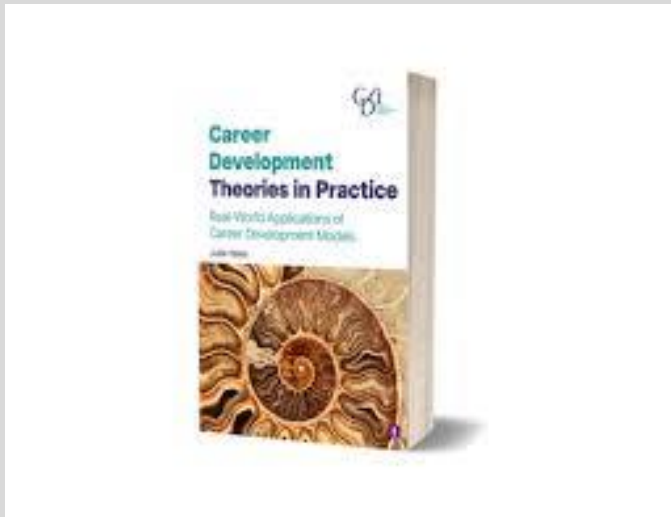
- It's hard to know which to use when

So...

[Career Theories in Practice online course](#) (CDI)

[Career Coaching Cards](#) (Amazon)

[Career Development Theories in Practice](#) (Trotman)

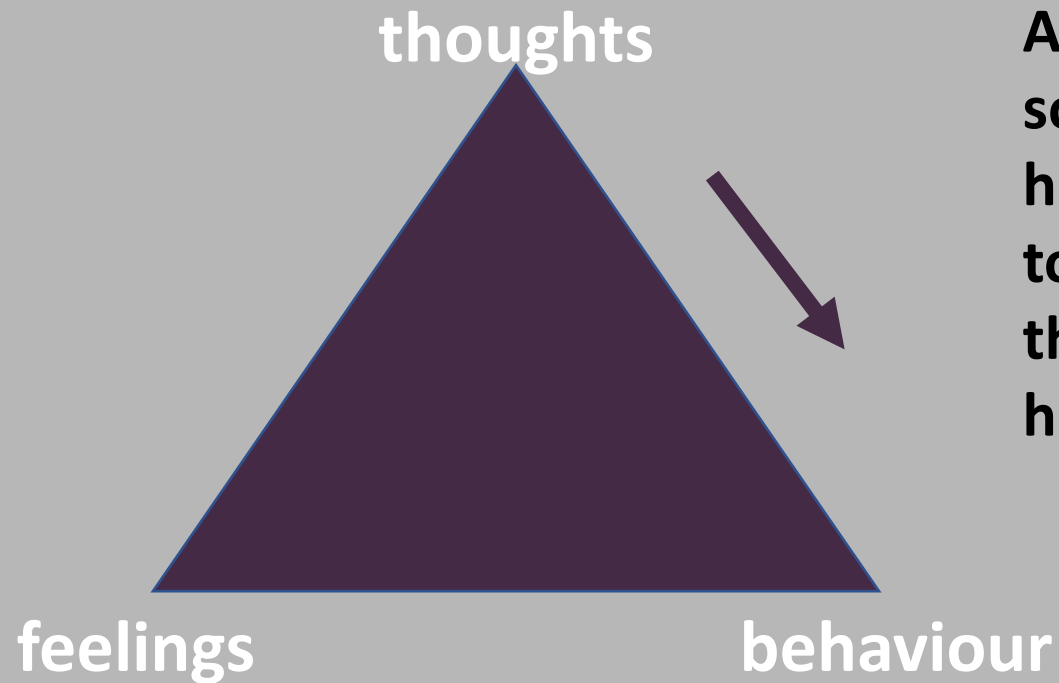


Acceptance and Commitment Therapy

To help clients to manage the impact of their anxiety

Behavioural analytic approaches

CBT encourages us to change the thoughts – replacing negative ones with positive ones



ACT acknowledges that sometimes this is too hard, so encourages us to decrease the impact the negative thoughts have

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy

Unhelpful thoughts or feelings can stop us from living the life we want to live

ACT suggests that we can learn to **accept** the negative thoughts and feelings and **commit** to living the life we want to



Acceptance and Commitment Therapy

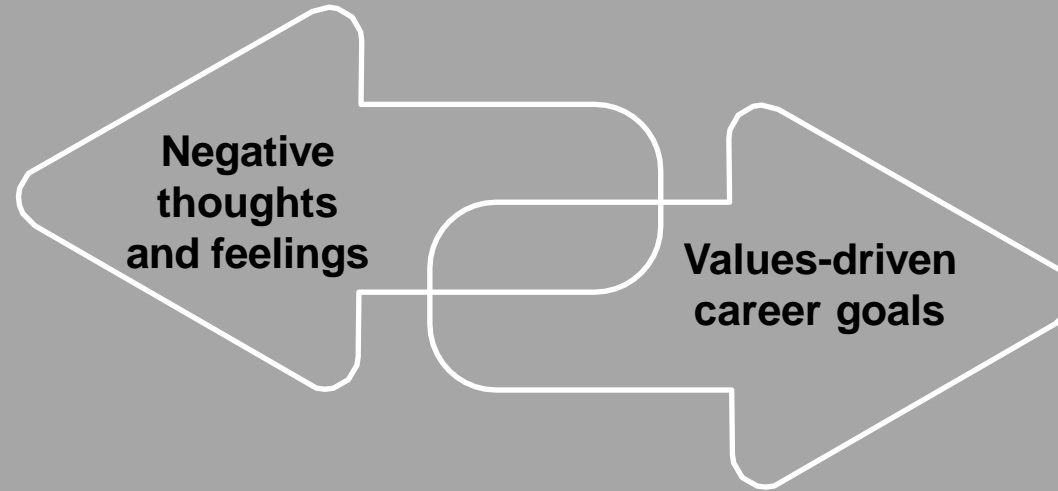
Practical Ideas

Shared explicitly to help clients
reframe their anxiety

The Retirement Party to help set
goals and identify values

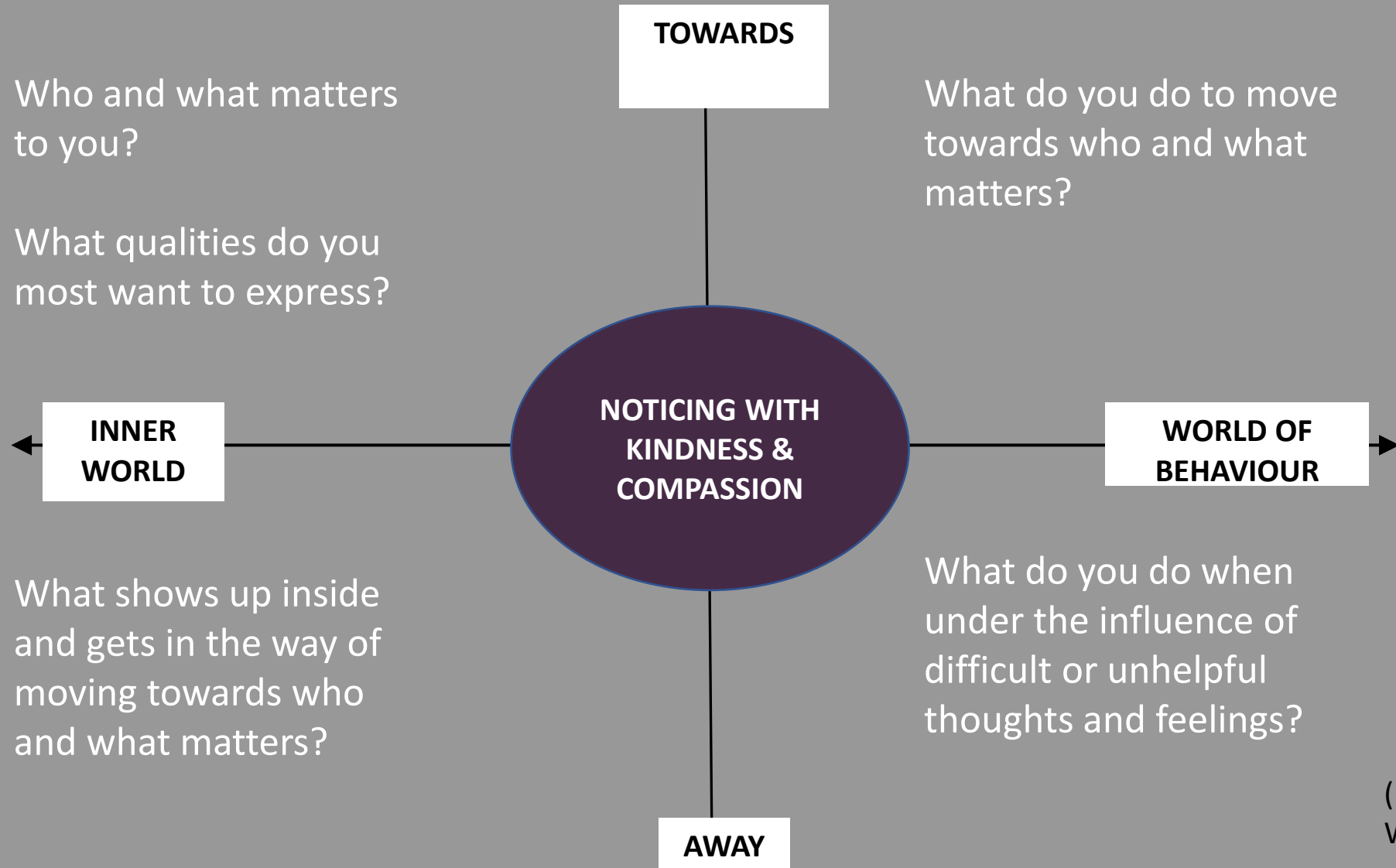
The Passengers on the Bus to
boost agency

The Matrix to help plan next steps



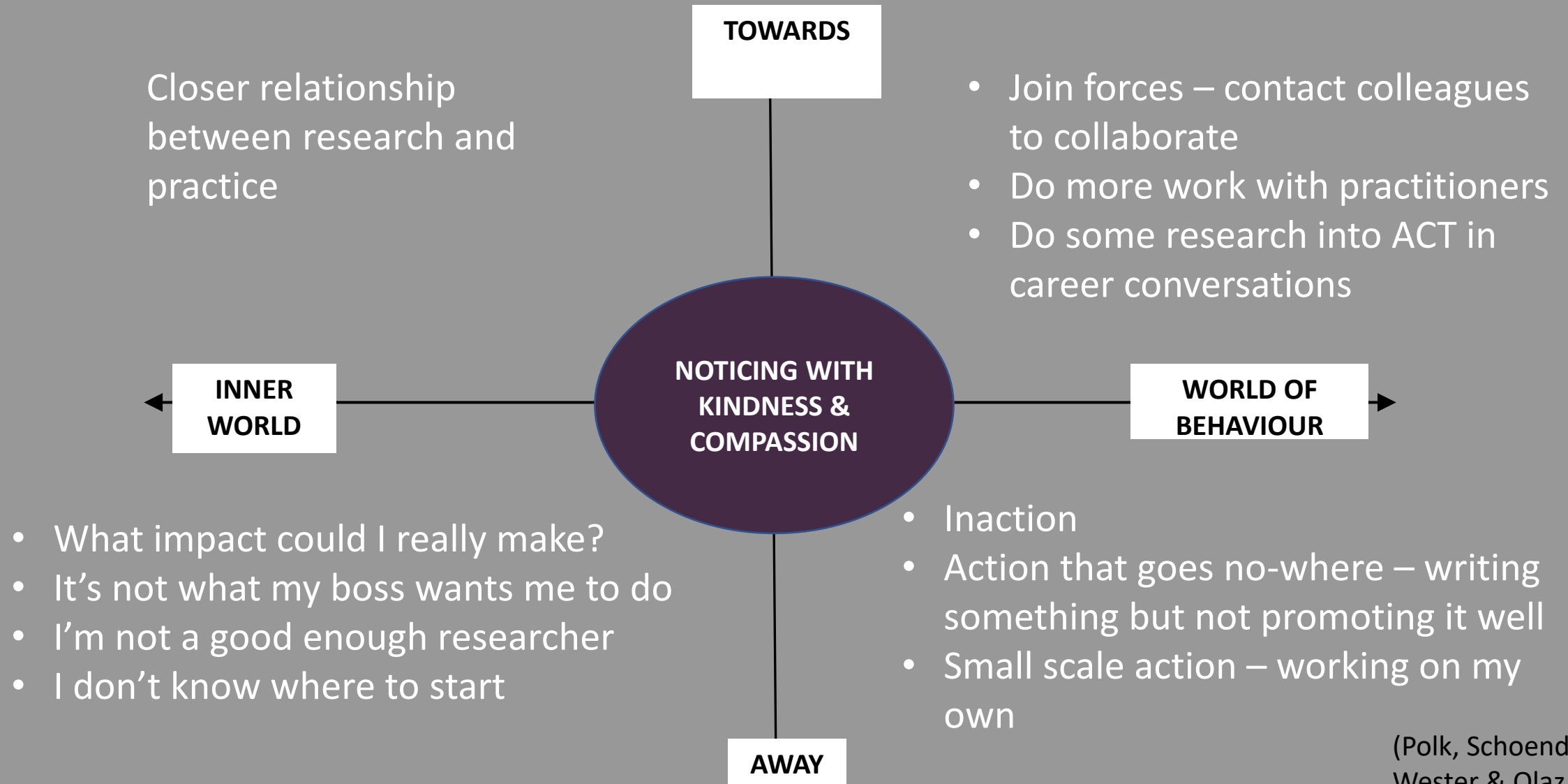
Sometimes our only hope of achieving our goals is just to go for it and make the decision to put up with any negative feelings that we might incur.

The ACT MATRIX



(Polk, Schoendorkff, Wester & Olaz, 2016)

The ACT MATRIX



Career Inaction Theory

Practical Ideas

Anxiety

- Role models
- ACT

Short term-ism

- Visualisations
- Letter from your future self

Cognitive overload

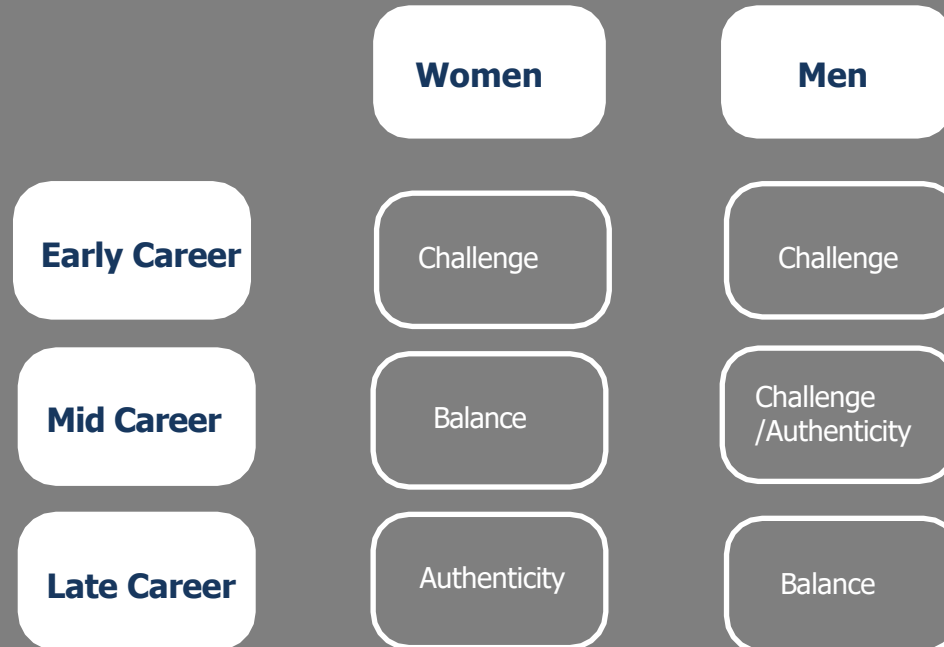
- Post-it notes
- Just do one thing



Kaleidoscope Career Model

Practical Ideas

Shared explicitly to normalise and validate
As a framework to help clients consider their own needs



Savickas's Career Construction Theory

Life Themes

What matters to me?

Vocational Personality

What do I want to be good at?

Adaptability

How can I craft my life and work?

Creating and Re-creating Stories



Savickas's Career-style Interview

Who did you admire when you were growing up? Who would you like to fashion your life after? Pick three role models

Represent ego-ideals or a central life goal. Concentrate on what is admired rather than who is admired

What is your all time favourite story?

Stories reveal a major character who faces a similar problem

What do you do with your free time?

Deals with self-expression and reveals manifest interests

What are your earliest recollections?

Reveal a core problem the individual faces

Savickas's Career Style Interview

What is your favourite motto or saying / what saying would you have printed on a t-shirt / tell me about a phrase or saying you can remember.

What do you like about it?

How aligned is your life with it?

What would be different in your life, if you were living it according to that saying?

How could that motto inform your current career dilemma?

What next?

Formal training is almost never actually implemented.

Put it into practice as soon as you can.

Get some colleagues on board

Do keep in touch! I'm always keen to hear whether these ideas make a difference to your practice: [*julia.yates.1@city.ac.uk*](mailto:julia.yates.1@city.ac.uk)