

Don't let stress influence your job hunting decisions

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Job enjoyment and stability are not mutually exclusive.

Stress does funny things to our thoughts. We're all familiar with the [fight or flight response](#) and its ability to bring out our inner hunter or sprinter. But when we're considering different work options, stress seems to induce an enjoy or be practical response. We assume that we can pursue either something inherently rewarding, or something stable and practical, but never the twain shall meet.

I'm not claiming that all jobs are equally stable, or that you should do what you love and expect that the money will, indeed, follow. But the assumption that enjoyment and stability are mutually exclusive is, frankly, a terrible starting point. Don't consign yourself to a job you'll dislike without doing thorough research, because stress can make under-researched assumptions seem really, really compelling.

If you need a survival job, right now:

- List the tasks you hate most; list the environments you hate most
 - Jobs involving both of the above go on your "last resort" list
- List the values that are most important to you; if possible, entirely avoid applying to jobs that conflict with your top values
- List tasks you enjoy; list environments you enjoy
 - Jobs involving both are your second priority; first priority are those that also match your values
- Jobs involving only tasks *or* environments *or* values that matter to you are third priority – but feel free to play around with the order of priority, based on what sits right with you

If you're trying to find a *career*:

- List every career that you secretly hope exists, especially those you are convinced don't exist
- List every assumption you can come up with that you're making: that the work is unstable, that it doesn't pay well, that you'd need completely different training than what you have, that you'd need to move to the U.S.... everything that comes to mind
- Ask people who they know who does something like the careers on your list, starting with the people in your uni career centre, if you have access
- Look for people doing what you want to do on LinkedIn and, if you have access to it, any alumni directories or mentor programs you have access to. While LinkedIn is getting less user-friendly, it still lets you scope out and find people and job postings of interest
- Look for professional organizations related to what you want to do
- Go ahead – make Facebook and its encouragement of "weak ties" work for you; write a post asking people if they know anyone doing the work you want to do

Commit to setting up conversations with people you find, and base at least some of the questions you'll ask on the assumptions that you've listed. If you don't like the answers you get, you'll be no further behind. But even then, you can still ask questions that get you further ahead: "If I *were* to pursue further training to break into the field, what would be the quickest route to do so?" or "Do some employers in this area favour having permanent employees over

contract workers?" or whatever questions can help you decide on what kinds of work are both practical and rewarding for you.