

## WHAT DO I WANT TO DO WHEN I GROW UP?

### Preliminaries

In science, decisions we make are based on objective factors; factors that can be quantified by anyone in the field. Life is more complicated than that. When we make life decisions, such as answering the above question, subjective and objective factors come into play. The **objective** factors include ones **skills** and **aptitudes**, and **job markets**. **Subjective** factors include your **interests** and **values**; What subject(s) turn you on, do you care where you live? Do you have an all absorbing hobby? do you aspire to a particular life-style above all else? Is money or fame of importance to you? Job security? Is work environment important? Are you afraid of the known? **personal characteristics**; ambition, ego, determination, perseverance: **ideals**; do you aspire to add to knowledge? to educate future generations? Is having a family important? Do you like to help others?: The list is unending.

These subjective and objective factors are the "heart" and "mind", respectively, of the poets. Decisions with the best chance of leading to a good outcome are those for which the heart and mind agree. Follow your instincts; tempered by rational decision-making!

A different way of approaching the subject was described to me by a high-school counselor: Each student must ask "Who am I?", "Where do I want to go?", and "How do I get there?" Below, I discuss some factors that go into answering the first two questions. Excellent help in answering the third question can be found over at career services, at: [www.career.uconn.edu/](http://www.career.uconn.edu/)

" What Do I want to do when I grow up?" is a question you will visit from time-to-time over the next 40 to 50 years. It is not a one-time question with a permanent answer. It is possible that the answer will change with

time, as you yourself will, too. Of course, my comments reflect the subjective nature of the question, being strongly influenced by my own experiences and observations.

### Subjective Factors

The most important subjective factors to consider are those that lie outside of your lust for fortune or fame; that is, ideals and interests that lie outside of the self. Of course, in this complicated subject weight must be given to all of the factors. I'm emphasizing those factors that I consider most important. Certainly choose a subject that interests you. After all, you'll be working at this for 8 hr/day, 5 days/week, 50 weeks/ yr, for some part of your future; you may as well choose something you find interesting.

'What if I don't have an overwhelming interest?' Well, that's the toughest part of the job selection process. Attend lectures on a wide range of subjects. A good teacher can spark your interest. People get interested in subjects into which they inject their own ideas; become involved with your reading, homework, and education. Don't just "get by". Follow up on those items that interest you.

### Objective Factors

You must be aware of your skills and aptitudes, and how these compare with those of others at the same stage of life. If you are in the top one-third of your profession you will probably make a passable living, and possibly avoid the inconvenience of being laid off. One reason for giving your strongest effort to your studies is so that your estimate of your relative capabilities will be an accurate one. Recognize that there is great satisfaction in contributing your special skills to society.

You must aim high enough, relative to your abilities, to maintain your interest and to give you challenge, but not so high as to drop you below

the median performance in your chosen field. Instability of employment is a recurring fact of modern life. Minimize your participation in "downsizing" by being in the top 1/3 of your group. However, there are no guarantees about stable employment. Remember the old adage: your best job security is the ability to get your next job. Network; keep in touch with classmates, friends. Build an array of contacts you can call on when prospects at your present place of employment look bad.

Stay abreast of technology, which leads me to my final quote: aspire to life-long learning. To quote from T.H.White in "The Once and Future King": "'The best thing for being sad,' replied Merlyn, beginning to puff and blow, 'is to learn something. That is the only thing that never fails. You may grow old and trembling in your anatomies, you may lie awake at night listening to the disorder in your veins, you may miss your only love, you may see the world about you devastated by evil lunatics, or know your honor trampled in the sewers of baser minds. There is only one thing for it, then - to learn. Learn why the world wags, and what wags it. That is the only thing the mind can never exhaust, never alienate, never be tortured by, never fear or distrust, and never dream of regretting.'"