Reflective Activity

Reflecting on your strengths, semi-structured interview prompts

Activity Description

Audience: typically students or alumni looking to clarify what areas to focus on in their job search or next steps. I find this particularly useful when they have done disparate things, or have many interests...this can be useful to find threads across activities. The reflective questions also focus solely on strengths or positives of a position which can often be a different narrative than the typical stories we tell ourselves of our recent experiences.

We then focus not just on what they CAN do, but skills/interests/environments that are most fulfilling to subsequently prioritize.

Preparation, Handouts, Resources

We discuss this potential activity during an appointment. Sometimes, students/alumni do the prompts as part of a larger assessment using the MBTI and/or the Strong Interest Inventory too.

I keep the prompts as a canned response in my gmail, then I include them in a tailored message to the respondent. I then ask that they write or type their responses and send them to me at least 1 day in advance of our next appointment.

I then review their responses in detail, mining for themes, key points and threads. I then try to report back with a bulleted list of the following (see example below). Strengths language is born of VIA Assessment of Character Strengths from Penn (viacharacter.org). We then meet for 45-min to process their experience of writing the questions, and discuss themes we both found.
Report sample:

Feedback from the questions
From the information you shared, here are a few things that seemed to come up again and again:

Highlighted Strengths
These were impressions of personal or character-based strengths that carry through much of your statements. Examples: Detail oriented, Problem-Solving, Collaboration, Take and sustain initiative, Responsive

Preferred Skills
This highlights areas you're good at, and more importantly things you find fulfillment doing.
Examples: Detail-oriented planning, Delivering instruction & training to improve process/systems and employee experience, Creation of systems and procedures

Preferred Environments
Personal: Example responses: Social, Collaborative, Ability to take initiative

By supervisors/management: Examples: Responsive, Clear, Agency to make decisions and advocate for change.

With Colleagues: Examples: Collegial, Collaborative, Accountable, Willingness to learn/grow.

Questions that can guide further exploration:
How can I find an environment that will be more fulfilling?

What are positions that enable me to utilize my strengths and preferred skills (from above list)?

Learning Goals

Students will be able to articulate their values, skills and interests.

Challenges/Obstacles

I've done some training with positive psych folks from UPenn, along with my counseling/career coaching background. I would be happy to facilitate or consult if people have questions. The reflection done by the individual is valuable, and having an outside perspective to witness and dialogue with is very helpful.

Recommendations

I appreciate that this can re-frame experiences, especially well-established narratives we tell ourselves about our past jobs/experiences. This can also help organize and prioritize next steps in a job search, which can lead to greater efficiency and resiliency in what is a stressful process.

Tool Contributor
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