13

Career Transitions and Job Loss

CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

• Job loss concerns
• Personal and career problems associated with job loss
• How faulty cognitions interfere with logical thinking
• Counseling interventions for adults in transition
• Case study of a client who lost his job
• Case study of a woman’s reaction to the possibility of losing her job

In this chapter, I concentrate on the growing need for programs and strategies to assist adults in career transition. In the last three decades more attention has been focused on the development of counseling programs for individuals who choose to make a career change and for those who are forced into it. Changing work roles appears to be inevitable and most certainly unavoidable for many in the workforce. As Drucker (1992, 2002) among others pointed out, we are in the middle of a transformation in this nation that is not yet complete. A major aspect of this transformation includes changing occupational structures and career patterns. This transformation is rapid and highly discontinuous in nature; changes can be quite drastic and pervasive in scope. Change in the world of work has been described as tumultuous, and its fallout will certainly have an effect on who will prosper in the future. Current speculation suggests that individuals who will prosper are those who are intelligent enough to learn new skills and, most important, those who are willing to experience new and different work situations. The flexibility to adjust and adapt to different work environments and the capacity to relate to other people are the qualities that will characterize future workers. Workers will probably no longer experience the luxury of a steady stream of continuous change but, on the contrary, will be required to adapt quickly to new and different ideas, goals, procedures, tools, and requirements. The reality of today’s occupational world is that some individuals will be forced to make career transitions and others will choose to change careers to find satisfying work, suggesting there can be positive and negative consequences associated with adults in career transition (Zunker, 2008).

Adults in Transition

The problems associated with adult career transitions have occupied the attention of counselors for several decades. In the 1970s, for example, Moos and Tsu, (1976)
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suggested that there are at least two phases of the transition process that can be addressed. The first phase, as one would expect, focuses on elevated stress levels that usually accompany transitions. The researchers in this case have suggested that one’s initial reaction in the transition process is similar to a crisis reaction in that one has lost control of a situation and fear and panic follow. In the second phase, assuming that the client is in a more relaxed state of mind, one is to focus on situational influences, circumstances, and most importantly the client’s unique interpretations of past events and current circumstances. In 1984, Schlossberg’s well-known types of transition were identified as anticipated, unanticipated, chronic hassles, and events that do not happen. In brief, anticipated transitions are such events as graduation from high school and college, finding one’s first job, and marriage. The most obvious unanticipated transitions are being fired or transferred to another location. As the name implies, chronic hassles refers to such events as having to deal with a hostile boss, poor working conditions, and long hours. The transition described as events that do not happen includes not getting a promotion, the corner office, or a requested change in work schedule. No doubt one’s career transitions are likely to include some of the preceding examples and more. The astute counselor, however, assists the client in assessing undesirable factors in a work environment as well as the desirable ones. One is to also recognize that there are numerous reasons and situational conditions why someone may be anticipating job change. A voluntary job change may simply be an expression of job satisfaction and desire to find a different challenge and opportunity; like so many other changes one makes in life, job change can be an individual matter. Job change or loss, however, can also be the result of a federally declared recession such as the one in 2009.

Job Loss Concerns

Clients who have lost their jobs due to the impact of a recession and remain unemployed are likely to experience some psychological effects of job loss and the stress that is associated with job search. These individuals are often required to reevaluate their skills and goals, which may result in a completely different career direction. Beneath the surface of immediate career concerns, an individual’s self-worth can be threatened by the loss of a regular paycheck and career identity. Moreover, there are often interrelated personal concerns associated with other life roles that need to be addressed. In essence, the psychological effects of unemployment can be very pervasive. There are, however, differences in the effects of unemployment by age and gender. Middle-age men tend to react more negatively to unemployment than do older and younger men (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2010; Vosler & Page-Adams, 1996). It appears that workers in their 50s tend to experience less stress because many of them had considered early retirement, changing to a different job, or assuming a consultant role (Leana & Feldman, 1992; Feldman, 2002). According to Kulik (2001), women who lose their jobs report a greater decline in general health than men do.

The major intended outcome of employment is to earn a living wage; however, there are also important psychological consequences derived from work that are discontinued when one is out of work. More than 30 years ago, Jahoda (1981) captured the unintended consequences of work: (1) a daily time structure that is devoted to working, (2) shared experiences and interactions with cohorts and other individuals outside the nuclear family, (3) the opportunity to express purpose and goals of life, (4) reinforcement of personal status and identity, and (5) participation in activities associated with work that is viewed as a necessity in the give-and-take of daily life. Be aware that work’s pervasive nature and complex meaning in one’s life are not the argument here. What
is being emphasized is the loss of valuable sources of support for one’s psychological well-being (Muchinsky, 2003). Counselors will find that individuals differ in their reactions to loss of support; for example, some may become clinically depressed, some may experience increased difficulty with personal relationships, whereas others will present significant mood swings. Combinations of concerns are often presented.

The inability to provide funds for oneself and/or family can be a major source of stress. The loss of adequate housing, ample food, and other essentials can be devastating for families and is a major source of problems in maintaining relationships. As some see it, there is loss of control over one’s life when the social contract for work has been broken (Rousseau, 1995). Along with the loss of job is the loss of a socially approved role and social contacts. Counselors should not be surprised to find that individuals as well as family members feel isolated, insecure, and experience a poor sense of well-being. In sum, the psychological effects of job loss vary by age and gender; can be the primary source of mental health problems, relationship concerns, and concerns involving multiple life roles; and negatively affect an individual’s sense of well-being. The studies in the 1990s concerning the effects of job loss have been reinforced by more recent studies.

A recent study of the effects of unemployment suggested that a significant number of unemployed workers have experienced mental health problems, poor life satisfaction, marital and/or family problems, as well as physical health problems (McKee-Ryan et al., 2005). Not surprisingly, when these workers were reemployed, the negative effects of job loss were significantly moderated. Of interest to counselors are key factors of influences that were important variables experienced by the individuals in this study. Cognitive appraisal of current circumstances of the individuals studied included stress reactions to job loss as well as reemployment expectations. Coping resources included personal, social, and financial matters as well as coping with a lengthy time of unemployment. Coping strategies included job search efforts, problem solving, and focusing on emotional control. Clearly the personal benefits of the work role were the central foci of concerns among individuals who experienced job loss; however, the effects of job loss can be very pervasive in that one’s psychological and physical well being are adversely impacted (McKee-Ryan et al., 2005).

Job loss has a substantial negative effects on self-esteem, self-efficacy, and total lifestyle as well as emotional problems resulting in mood disorders. The major point here is that job loss does indeed create severe problems for those that experience it. Ebberwein (2001) suggests that victims of job loss should manage this most difficult transition as follows:

1. Manage to keep a healthy sense of urgency.
2. Carefully review your career options and how you can achieve them in spite of gloomy predictions of future work available.
3. Recognize that you must accept the necessity of change as soon as possible.
5. Focus on realistic goals and make plans to achieve them.

Using these suggestions as a starting point for reemployment, I next briefly discuss intervention counseling programs for adults in career transition.

### Interventions for Adults in Career Transition

Career counseling programs for adults in career transition have many elements in common with programs designed for initial career choice. However, there are
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enough different and distinct factors involved in career transition to merit the development of specific programs for adults considering career change. Major considerations are the individual adult experiences associated with work, leisure, family, and individualized lifestyle. Life’s experiences provide both the counselor and the individual with a rich source of information from which to launch a career exploration. Identifying developed skills, interests, work experiences, and reformulated goals are examples of program strategies for the adult in career transition. Counselors may choose to use some, but not all strategy components for adults in the career counseling process. Some adults may have definite commitments to certain work roles such as building trades and want to focus only on related jobs in that industry. Others may be focused on local occupations available while others are seeking educational information for advancing their career. The point here is that counselors are to focus on individual needs; one’s career development can indeed be an individual matter. Viewing development as a lifelong process reinforces the current importance placed on retraining and lifelong learning (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2010).

A counseling program for adults in career transition is outlined in Table 13.1. This program consists of seven intervention components referred to as strategies. Each intervention strategy has suggested technique options and specific tasks. The technique options suggested do not rule out other methods of accomplishing the specific tasks. Brief explanations of each intervention component follow.

### Experience Identification

Valuable assets often overlooked in career counseling are work and life experiences. One goal of this component is to evaluate past experiences carefully in relation to potential use in career selection. Typically, the adult overlooks the value of developed skills or only casually considers them in career exploration. This component is designed to provide the structure from which counselor and counselee can effectively evaluate an individual’s background of experiences and relate them to interests, work requirements, and other variables associated with occupations.

The technique options suggested for this intervention strategy provide the counselor with alternatives to meet individual needs. In most instances, combinations of suggested options can be used. For example, after an individual writes an autobiography, the counselor can follow with an interview or work experience analysis or both. In other instances, only one of the options might be needed. This decision is often based on time availability and the educational level of the client.

The first technique option is the interview. An interview’s primary purpose in this context is to assist the client in evaluating work and leisure experiences, training, and education in relation to potential occupational choices. In a holistic approach to counseling, personal and career concerns are viewed as inseparable, as discussed in chapter 4. The suggestion here is to be sensitive to any work/family conflicts, faulty beliefs, and affective concerns. The interview should focus on (1) specific work experiences, (2) specific educational/training experiences, (3) specific leisure experiences and preferences, (4) specific likes and dislikes of former jobs, and (5) special recognitions. In general, the interview should provide the basis from which the next step in the counseling program is determined. (See chapter 5.)

The format for the autobiography can be either structured or unstructured. In the latter approach, the individual is instructed to write an autobiography without being given any specific guidelines. In the structured approach, the individual may be instructed to follow an outline or answer specific questions or both. The structured
### Table 13.1 Intervention Counseling Program for Adults in Career Transition

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<tr>
<th>Strategy component</th>
<th>Technique option</th>
<th>Specific tasks</th>
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<td>I. Experience identification</td>
<td>1. Interview</td>
<td>1. Identify and evaluate previous work experience</td>
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<td>2. Autobiography</td>
<td>2. Identify and evaluate life experiences</td>
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<td>3. Background information format and guide</td>
<td>3. Identify desired work tasks and leisure experiences</td>
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<td>4. Work and leisure experience analysis</td>
<td>4. Assess familial relationships</td>
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<td>5. Identify reasons for job change</td>
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<td>6. Identify career satisfaction variables</td>
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<td>7. Identify factors that contributed to job changes</td>
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<td>8. Identify reasons for current interest in career change</td>
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<td>II. Interest identification</td>
<td>1. Interest inventories</td>
<td>1. Identify and evaluate occupational interests</td>
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<td>2. Identify specific interest patterns</td>
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<td>3. Relate interest to past experience</td>
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<td>4. Compare interest with identified skills</td>
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<td>5. Relate interest to potential occupational requirements</td>
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<td>6. Relate interests to avocational needs</td>
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<td>III. Skills identification</td>
<td>1. Self-analysis of developed skills</td>
<td>1. Identify and evaluate developed skills from previous work tasks</td>
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<td>2. Self-estimates of developed skills</td>
<td>2. Identify and evaluate developed skills from leisure learning experiences</td>
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<td>3. Standardized measures of developed skills</td>
<td>3. Identify and evaluate developed skills from formal learning experiences</td>
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<td>4. Identify and evaluate developed functional, technical, and adaptive skills</td>
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<td>IV. Value and needs clarification</td>
<td>1. Value and needs assessment through standardized inventories</td>
<td>1. Clarify values in relation to life and work</td>
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<td>2. Values clarification exercises</td>
<td>2. Determine level and order of needs in relation to life and work</td>
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<td>3. Identify satisfaction and dissatisfaction variables associated with work</td>
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<td>5. Identify expectations of future work and lifestyle</td>
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<td>6. Identify desirable work environments, organizations, and peer affiliates</td>
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<td>7. Realistically assess potential future achievements</td>
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<td>8. Assess potential movement within current work environment</td>
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<td>9. Identify work roles and leisure roles and how they interrelate with lifestyle</td>
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<td>10. Relate values to factors that contribute to obsolescence</td>
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<td>11. Identify personal factors associated with career decision</td>
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V. Education/training planning

1. Published materials
2. Locally compiled information resources
3. Computerized system
4. Internet

1. Identify sources of educational/training information
2. Identify continuing education programs
3. Identify admission requirements to educational/training programs
4. Investigate potential credit for past work experience and previously completed training programs
5. Evaluate accessibility and feasibility of educational/training programs
6. Identify and assess financial assistance and other personal assistance programs
7. Relate identified skills to educational/training programs for further development

VI. Occupational planning

1. Published printed materials
2. Internet
3. Computer information systems
4. Visit files

1. Identify sources of occupational information
2. Identify and assess occupational opportunities
3. Relate identified skills and work experience to specific occupational requirements
4. Evaluate occupations from a need-fulfilling potential
5. Relate identified goals to occupational choice
6. Relate family needs to occupational benefits
7. Identify educational/training needs for specific occupations

VII. Toward a life learning plan

1. Decision-making exercises
2. Life-planning exercises
3. Making the transition to self-development

1. Learn decision-making techniques
2. Clarify short-term and long-term goals
3. Identify original and reformulated career goals
4. Contrast differences between original and reformulated goals
5. Identify alternative goals
6. Clarify goals in relation to family expectations
7. Develop a flexibility plan for life learning
8. Develop life-planning skills
9. Identify lifestyle preferences
10. Identify attitude and beliefs of a self-directed approach

Table 13.1 (Continued)

Table: | Strategy component | Technique option | Specific tasks |
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An autobiographical sketch can be used to identify relevant information. First, the individual is instructed to describe a significant accomplishment, such as starring in a dramatic production, being a leader in a civic group, or teaching photography. Descriptions of the accomplishment are analyzed to determine the use of functional, adaptive, and technical skills. Each autobiographical sentence is analyzed and later compiled and related to Holland’s six modal personal styles. The following sentence,
for example, is taken from a description of teaching photography and is analyzed for functional, adaptive, and technical skills:

I started each class by demonstrating the proper use of a number of different cameras.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Functional Skills</th>
<th>Adaptive Skills</th>
<th>Technical Skills</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>teaching</td>
<td>leadership</td>
<td>knowledge of cameras</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>communication</td>
<td>articulate</td>
<td>orderly</td>
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Skills that are easily identifiable are those that are explicitly stated, whereas other skills are only implied, such as those needed to accomplish the task. In this case, teaching, communication, and camera knowledge are fairly explicit, whereas being articulate, orderly, and showing leadership are only implied.

The next option, background information, requires that the individual fill out a specified form. The information requested includes demographic data; marital status and family size; a list of jobs held and duties, education, and training completed; armed services experiences; honors and awards; leisure preferences; hobbies; and other related information. A variety of approaches may be used to identify satisfaction and dissatisfaction variables associated with work and other experiences. One technique is to ask the individual to rank-order or to list likes and dislikes of each past job held. Another option is to provide spaces for free response reactions to work and other experiences.

Following the example of Bolles (2009), a work and leisure experience analysis form was designed (Figures 13.1 and 13.2), on which the individual lists specific work (Part I) and leisure experiences (Part II). In addition, the individual indicates likes and dislikes of the experiences listed. The objective is to identify tasks and experiences that may be considered in future career choices.

A review of the tasks for this intervention component suggests that the major objective is to identify specific desired work tasks, leisure experiences, family/conflicts, lifestyle, and potential reasons for job change. Using this information, the counselor and client should be able to identify a partial list of career satisfaction variables. The tentative conclusions and outcomes of this component will usually provide information for the skills identification and development component but will also be integrated into other components of the program.
Interest Identification

Career counseling and interest identification have had a close association in their respective developments. Measured interests have primarily been used in predicting job satisfaction in career counseling programs. In our efforts to assist the adult in career transition, we must also be concerned with interests and their relationship to potential occupational choices. Conceptually, it is thought that interest identification can broaden and stimulate adults’ exploratory career options.

Adult clients should be in a relatively good position to identify individual interests, primarily from past experiences. Some are able, however, to identify uninteresting tasks and jobs but may not focus on positive interests. For these individuals, interest identification is essential; therefore, the suggested technique option for this component consists of interest inventories that cover a wide range of interests. As with the use of all assessment inventories, careful consideration should be given to the selection of the inventory. Briefly, the counselor should assess the counselee’s educational level, expectations of the future, reading level, educational and training potentials, cultural background, and sexual orientation, among other factors. A number of inventories are also available for nonreaders. A list of inventories is provided in chapter 6.

The task for intervention component II is to identify interest clusters or patterns as well as specific interest indicators. A major task is to relate identified interests to occupational variables and education/training opportunities in the following components to ensure that all components are well integrated.

Skills Identification and Development

Skills identification and particularly the development of new skills have received increasing attention in the workplace. We begin by focusing on three methods that can be used to identify each client’s skills. The first method focuses on identifying skills developed from previous experiences in work, hobbies, social activities, community volunteer work, and other leisure experiences. (See examples of skills in Figures 13.3 and 13.4.) The rationale for this objective is that people, in general, fail to recognize developed skills and do not know how to relate them to occupational requirements.
Part Three • Career Transitions and Adult Career Development Concerns

Bolles (2009) has long suggested that functional/transferable skills can best be identified by using a “quick job-hunting map.” Holland provided a method to identify developed skills through self-estimates of ability. These methods along with career-related computerized systems concentrate on self-estimates of developed skills. The first technique option, self-analysis of developed skills, can be accomplished through the work and leisure experience analysis forms used in intervention component I. For example, the compiled specific tasks on this form provide sources for identifying developed skills.

Three steps are necessary to identify skills from the work and leisure analysis form: (1) list specific work tasks; (2) identify functional, adaptive, and technical skills for each work task; and (3) relate each functional, adaptive, and technical skill to one or more of Holland’s six modal personal styles. For those skills that are difficult to identify using Holland’s six modal personal styles, The Occupations Finder (Holland, 1987c) will help.

The second technique option, self-estimates of developed skills, can be accomplished by having the individual rate each functional, adaptive, and technical skill as good, average, or poor as illustrated in the previous example. These rankings provide self-estimates of skills within Holland’s (1992) modal personal styles and corresponding work environments model.

A more traditional method of evaluating skills is through standardized testing, which is our third technique option. A variety of aptitude tests on the market today provide methods of evaluating skills based on normative data. Several aptitude tests were identified in chapter 6.

The importance of specific skills identification is to encourage the client to consider skills developed from a variety of experiences as important factors in career exploration. By requiring that the individual identify skills in adaptive, functional, and technical groups, a more precise relationship to occupational requirements is
understood, thus promoting a more realistic evaluation for future goals. This intervention strategy stresses the identification of skills from the individual’s total lifestyle experiences.

### Value and Needs Clarification

The emphasis thus far has underscored a holistic approach to counseling adults. This strategy correspondingly includes the adult’s total lifestyle. Thus, this intervention component focuses on the individual adult’s values and needs. More specifically, individualized values and needs are considered in relation to multiple life roles of work, leisure, and family. Each value and need must be considered in relation to the others. This approach recognizes that values are intertwined and interrelated.

The first technique option assesses values and needs through standardized inventories. Several inventories on the market today can be used for this purpose. Most inventories provide complete instructions for interpretation and counseling use. (See chapter 6 for available inventories.)

Values clarification exercises are suggested as a second technique option. Values clarification may be accomplished in groups as well as in individual counseling programs. It is important to select strategies that emphasize skills that assist individuals in identifying and developing their value systems. See the *Life Values Inventory* (Crace & Brown, 1996) for suggestions of value clarification strategies.

The lifestyle component is indeed a broad, rather all-encompassing concept of career counseling. In this context, we consider the individual’s entire system of values and needs associated with lifestyle. Individually developed values and needs may be thought of as an integrated system that determines satisfaction with life. We may dichotomize value systems for clarification, but eventually we must address the entire system of values. Our goal is to communicate to the adult in career transition that life is indeed multifaceted and that satisfactory solutions cannot be oversimplified. We must consider who we are, where we have been, and that our futures are relatively unpredictable.

### Education and Training

With a major emphasis on lifelong learning, it is safe to assume that education/training information is a high priority among adults in career transition. This intervention is designed to assist adults in identifying sources of educational/training information and making the most effective use of those sources. A greater variety of continuing education programs suggests that the working adult is in a much better position to improve his or her occupational skills. Exposure to educational/training opportunities should enhance the opportunities and options in career decision making.

This intervention strategy has four technique options. As with most other intervention strategies, and particularly with this one, using all or combinations of options is recommended. The first option suggests using published materials. An important resource for working adults is locally compiled information, suggested as the second technique option. Educational/training programs within reasonable commuting distances and/or instructional programs on Internet websites provide opportunities for training while maintaining occupational and family obligations.

Counselors should encourage clients to evaluate any in-house training programs at their work site that may be available. On-site programs usually include on-the-job and job rotation training. Off-site programs include lectures, audiovisual material,
computer-based training with the use of CD-ROM technology, web-based training, simulation, and role playing (Muchinsky, 2003).

The third technique option for this intervention component is computerized career information systems. A number of interactive and information-oriented computer-assisted guidance programs are available today (as discussed in chapter 7). Generally, three types of educational/training information files are available by computer: files containing programs for all states, files containing program information on a regional basis within states, and files of programs available nationally. Individual needs may dictate the need for localized programs.

The Internet, a fourth option, has the potential of providing relevant educational/training information files from local as well as state, national, and international sources. Read chapters 7 and 8 carefully to determine the most appropriate use of the Internet.

The specific tasks for this component encourage a systematic approach to using educational/training opportunities. Exposure to educational/training opportunities should encourage many adults to consider methods of upgrading their skills for higher level job opportunities. Second, many adults will be encouraged to consider educational/training programs to stay abreast with changing times. Possible educational credit from past work experiences should also provide the incentive for some clients to enter continuing educational/training programs. Finally, each client should be encouraged to adopt a lifelong learning commitment.

### Occupational Planning

Occupational planning and the previously discussed educational/training component have many commonalities. Both focus on providing information to assist the adult in making the most effective use of occupational information. In fact, these two components are so closely related that they are often accessed at the same time. Consequently, resources often combine educational/training requirements with occupational information.

Three technique options for this component are using published materials, computer-assisted programs, and the Internet. Computer-assisted programs and the use of the Internet for career development are discussed in chapter 7. Most computer-assisted programs contain national occupational information files, but many provide occupational information on a local or regional basis within states. International occupational information can be located on the Internet. Many state and federal agencies provide labor forecasts and occupational information that should be incorporated into this intervention strategy.

The fourth technique option, visit files, can be an important segment for delivering relevant occupational information. A visit file provides the names of individuals or organizations who agree to visits and interviews by people interested in obtaining firsthand information about certain occupations. This file is usually compiled locally through personal contacts and in some cases may be available through purchased programs. Many computer-assisted programs that provide localized and regional data contain visit files.

The tasks for this component suggest that occupational information is more than just information about a job. For example, personal goal satisfaction, family/financial needs, and use of identified skills are just some of the variables to consider when accessing occupational information. Of major importance are the potential need-fulfilling opportunities available in each occupation under consideration. Finally, counselors are to help clients keep occupational information in perspective. Clients need to
consider only as many options and choices as they can appropriately process to avoid information overload and subsequent indecision.

**Toward a Life Learning Plan**

This component assists in the development of a life learning plan that is self-directed. Decision-making techniques and life-planning exercises provide two methods of developing effective planning. The rationale for life learning is based on a continuing need to develop planning strategies to (1) meet technological changes, (2) stay abreast of the information explosion, (3) upgrade skills, and (4) reduce the chances of becoming obsolete. In addition, and perhaps more important, changing individual needs and reformulated goals also create a demand for effective planning. The techniques and skills developed in this component enhance decision-making techniques for meeting both occupational changes and changing individual needs associated with work, leisure, and lifestyle. Furthermore, these skills not only provide methods for formulating current plans but also encourage the development of strategies for long-range goals.

The first technique option, decision-making exercises, helps individuals effectively develop plans and decide on future options. The rationale here is that more adults are to assume a self-directed approach for career development. Learning to process information effectively to clarify future work requirements and identify relevant educational/training options should be fostered. Several examples of decision-making strategies are discussed in chapter 3.

The second technique option promotes life-planning strategies. The specific task of establishing alternative plans for the future should be emphasized in this component. Skills identification and personal lifestyle preferences are integrated to provide the basis for alternative plans to meet future goals. Clarifying differences between original goals and reformulated goals is a counseling objective of this intervention; effective life-planning strategies help individuals develop options and make effective decisions.

The third technique option suggests that adults can be greatly assisted by helping them make the transition to a self-development approach to career development. By identifying attitudes and beliefs that accompany a self-development mind-set, the counselor introduces rich sources of information that can be used in group as well as in individual counseling sessions. Clients must be reminded that they must take full responsibility for their career development, which can start with their willingness to learn new work requirements and relational skills.

Lifelong learning is an ongoing process that should be viewed as cyclic; individual changes and external conditions may require the individual to recycle through one or more counseling intervention strategies. A life learning plan, therefore, should be viewed as continuous, but with intermittent pauses. The important message is that the skills learned through these options will provide effective methods of finding and using resource information, clarifying individual needs, making decisions, and planning for the future.

**Retraining Workers**

Industrial organizations have a long history of training workers as a vital part of their career development. Advances in technology have made it necessary to update current workers skills in many large organizations as well as small businesses. During a severe recession, however, workers who have lost their jobs and are in search of employment
may be forced to find training programs through their own initiative. You may recall the case study of Larry in chapter 3, who experienced job loss but found a training program that prepared him for a different type of job that was available. He chose a work role that required similar skills used in his previous job. Many of the unemployed, however, have not been as fortunate as Larry, but learning new skills through a variety of training programs has led some who have experienced the devastation of job loss to find work. What we have here is an approach to help clients who have lost their jobs to not only cope with personal problems associated with job loss but also to take aggressive action through job search techniques, retraining programs, along with methods of dealing with stress, anxiety, and depression. One is to address personal as well as career needs.

The second part of this chapter focuses on a client who lost his job because of a severe economic recession and another client who choose to change jobs because of the threat of job loss. The high rate of unemployment during the recession of 2009 affected the lives of many Americans as well as the lives of citizens in many other countries across the globe. Once again many workers lost their source of income and with it their self-respect. If the past is any indication of the future, we can expect to experience both good and bad economic times accompanied by changing work roles and periods in which there will be job loss; counselors are to be prepared to address career choice transitions.

Case 13.1 Ricardo’s Job Loss

A few days prior to Ricardo’s visit to a licensed professional counselor, he was told with a group of other workers that their jobs were being terminated. The foreman announced that due to the sharp decrease of orders for steel products, the company was forced to lay off workers. This message was similar to the messages many other workers received during the recession in 2009 and when jobs were outsourced to other countries in the 1990s.

Ricardo described his reaction as being completely surprised and then stunned. “I became very frustrated, then angry and that was followed by a feeling of resentment of being let go. I thought I was one of the best workers—but now I can’t help but feel I was a failure—a failure to my family, especially my two children!” Ricardo continued by stating that at this time he doesn’t want to talk to anyone and as he put it, “be left alone.” And added,” I had to do something so that’s why I’m here.”

Conceptualization of Ricardo’s Concerns in Four Domains

During the initial interview the counselor learned that Ricardo, a 29-year-old married man with two children, was a high school graduate who had lost a well-paying job and was currently experiencing reactions to the very stressful situation that accompanies job loss. In addition he blamed himself for being fired. As is often the case, even when one loses their job due to poor economic circumstances, the individual believes he or she is the culprit. The severity of one’s self-referent belief and the loss of self-esteem are often followed by stress-related anger. The counselor continued interviewing Ricardo, gathering the usual data including skill and experience identification and decided that although her observations should only be considered tentative, she conceptualized her client’s concerns in four domains in order to begin interventions as soon as possible. Her goal was to modify the severity of Ricardo’s concerns and correct faulty thinking. Her summation went something like this:

Career

Ricardo’s reaction to being fired is accompanied by anxiety, tension, and irritability. These barriers to rational thinking must be removed or moderated before he is able to adequately process information about jobs that may be available. Currently he is very frustrated and is very vulnerable to having a complete breakdown. He even rejects positive
occupational information that could eventually help him modify his distorted thinking and faulty belief system. Interventions should focus on cognitive restructuring. There were encouraging indications that Ricardo is more than likely a hard worker and can be successful in another work environment. He prefers skilled trades and working with his hands.

**Affective**

Currently Ricardo is very unstable and extremely emotional. He appears to be very fragile and gives the impression of someone who can easily lose control of his emotions. The danger here is that he could do irreplaceable harm to himself and others by overreacting to his false sense of failure. In sum, he is emotionally unstable and he is experiencing feelings of isolation and alienation. His emotional hypersensitivity which is accompanied by low esteem needs to be addressed.

**Cognitive-Behavioral**

Ricardo’s inappropriate behavior is influenced by faulty thinking and faulty beliefs. His behavior is self-destructive in that he refuses to believe that his job termination was the result of a severe recession but, on the contrary, wrongly believes that he is the culprit. This is a classic example of an overgeneralization of negative experiences associated with job loss, and it underscores his inability to process information for career decision making.

**Culture**

Ricardo is a third-generation Mexican American. He holds some traditional values, but claims he is more “American” than Mexican although he does endorse a collectivist view when it comes to his family. His English is more than adequate and he also claims to speak good Spanish. He suggests that he is an individualist in his approach to work and achievement but is traditional when it comes to family matters. Conflicts that arise from two different approaches to life and work will need further delineation.

To gain a fuller understanding of Ricardo’s beliefs, the counselor chose to administer the Career Thoughts Inventory (CTI) (Sampson et al., 1996a), which you may recall provides three scales—Decision Making Confusion, Commitment Anxiety, and External Conflict. The Beck Depression Inventory—II (BDI-II) (Beck et al., 1996) was also administered to determine the severity of observed symptoms of depression and in addition he was administered an inventory used to screen clients for substance abuse, the Substance Abuse Subtle Screening Inventory 3, (Miller, 1997). As one would expect, the results of the inventory measuring career thoughts indicated severe dysfunctional thinking. Ricardo’s depression level was considered as mild. There were no indications of substance abuse.

Using this information, the counselor and Ricardo agreed that it is most important to address his faulty thinking process. The rationale for this decision was based on the premise that dysfunctional thinking can lead to an increase of depressive reactions and inconsistent behavior patterns. Ricardo agreed that at this time he is not prepared to consider other job opportunities—as he put it, “I have to get hold of myself.”

Counselors are to assist clients in understanding how a person integrates data and acts in accordance with their unique interpretations of them. In Ricardo’s case, he wrongly believed that being fired from his job was his fault rather than to rationally observe that a severe recession has brought about the failure of a number of industrial organizations and subsequent unemployment. Dysfunctional thinking that was triggered by stressful reactions to job loss can adversely affect all life roles. Job loss is stressful no matter how it happens, but when one wrongly takes the blame, the chances of developing a psychological disorder significantly increase. One who is full of anger, mad at the world, and lacks self-esteem presents significant deficits that must be addressed.

In Ricardo’s case the counselor suggested cognitive restructuring to help him overcome the effects of dysfunctional thinking. Her major goal was to heighten Ricardo’s awareness of his thoughts and self-talk when he experiences anxiety. The point was made that negative thoughts can affect one’s ability to work as well as relate effectively to fellow workers. In addition, Ricardo was informed that stress reactivity can trigger faulty thinking as well as physiological responses that are harmful. He learned that the first step is to be aware of and identify faulty thinking and replace it with positive thoughts. I will continue with the case of Ricardo after discussing some concepts of faulty cognitions.

**Faulty Cognitions**

Helpers are challenged to give more attention to cognitive processes in career counseling from the social-learning and cognitive-theory approaches to career
development discussed in chapter 2. Somewhat similar approaches to cognitive functioning are irrational beliefs (Ellis, 1994) and faulty reasoning (Beck, 1985). More specifically, the individual’s perceptions of self and of people, events, experiences, and environment are seen as potential sources of mistaken and troublesome beliefs. Inaccurate information, inadequate alternatives, and negative constructs derived from life experiences are sources of faulty cognitions.

Faulty cognitions inhibit systematic, logical thinking and can be self-defeating. For example, a client’s expectations and assumptions can cause distorted perceptions and unrealistic thinking such as “There is only one career for me.” Doyle (1992, p. 185) presented the following examples of faulty cognitions that he suggested can lead to false conclusions and negative feelings:

1. Self-deprecating statements: These expressions reveal poor self-worth, for example, “I’m not a good student” or “No one really likes me.”
2. Absolute or perfectionist terms: When an individual sets up overly stringent guidelines for his or her behavior, the individual sets himself or herself up for self-criticism and a negative self-image. Conclusions that are absolute or perfectionist terms often include words such as must, ought, should, unless, or until. For example, “I should have been the one promoted” or “Unless I get an ‘A,’ I can’t go home.”
3. Overgeneralization of negative experiences: These are deductions based on too few examples of situations. Frequently, they are based on negative experiences that make clients think there are many obstacles, making the future hopeless and bleak. For example, “Since I failed the first exam, I will fail the course” or “All the children in school hate me.”
4. Negative exaggerations: These statements greatly magnify the true meaning of an event or reality. For example, “All professional athletes are greedy” or “You insulted my mother—you hate my family!”
5. Factually inaccurate statements: These remarks are based on inadequate or incorrect information. These erroneous data distort the client’s perceptions of reality. For example, “You need an ‘A’ average to get into college” or “Autistic children are lazy.”

Irrational expectations of career counseling, as suggested by Nevo (1987), are other examples of faulty cognitions and irrational thoughts often found in prospective clients:

1. There is only one vocation in the world that is right for me.
2. Until I find my perfect vocational choice, I will not be satisfied.
3. Someone else can discover the vocation suitable for me.
4. Intelligence tests would tell me how much I am worth.
5. I must be an expert or very successful in the field of my work.
6. I can do anything if I try hard, or I can’t do anything that doesn’t fit my talents.
7. My vocation should satisfy the important people in my life.
8. Entering a vocation will solve all my problems.
9. I must sense intuitively that the vocation is right for me.
10. Choosing a vocation is a one-time act.

Although faulty cognitions can lead to a multitude of personal problems, Mitchell and Krumboltz (1996) argued that the career decision-making process is most affected. Looking at it from a positive viewpoint, individuals with accurate, constructive beliefs will have fewer problems reaching their career goals. Moreover, realistic expectations foster positive emotional reactions to self and others.

What we have here are examples of how one’s thinking process can be adversely affected by cognitive schemas that are developed from one’s ecological system in which events and situational experiences influence one’s perceptions and interpretations of current events and situations. The rational for interventions that address faulty cognitions are designed to debunk thinking that is inconsistent with rational thinking and self-talk that is demeaning. One way to reconstruct thinking is to introduce self-enhancing thoughts that can promote the development of self-efficacy by having clients reflect on the long-term consequences of negative and faulty thinking. One of my clients told me that “it doesn’t take a rocket scientist to understand differences between negative and self-enhancing thoughts, but my problem is how to keep from thinking negatively.” This statement suggests to counselors that the process of change can take time and requires follow-up and homework assignments that support the development of rational thinking.
Homework Assignments

One could ask clients to record their thoughts before going to work, during work, and after work. Clients are to construct positive thoughts for those that are considered negative and discuss differences with the counselor. In the second example, clients are to make a list of goals such as decreasing doubts about career opportunities, increasing positive thinking through self-talk, and being successful in a job that is very demanding. For each goal, clients are to indicate levels of confidence that can be used as quantitative measures of success.

Goal 1 Confidence to decrease doubts about career opportunities from 40% to 80%.

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
No confidence A great deal of confidence

Goal 2 Confidence to increase positive thinking through self-talk from 40% to 70%.

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

Goal 3 Confidence in being successful in a job that is very demanding from 50% to 80%.

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

These examples can be effective by asking clients to designate their desired level of improvement for more positive thinking. One’s progress is to be self-monitored (Gormier, Nurius, & Osborn, 2009). There are also commercial workbooks on the market that are specifically designed to address dysfunctional thinking.

Another goal the counselor established with Ricardo involved the concept of self-enhancing thoughts in self-talk. The procedure is simply to change negative self-talk to self-enhancing talk in order to boost one’s self-efficacy. For example,

I am not very good at explaining procedures.

I know I’ll mess up today in that meeting.

Change to

I am able to express myself effectively if I put my mind to it.

I believe I can make a contribution by offering my explanations of solutions.

The value of this exercise supports the idea that differences in thinking can make significant differences in one’s work role and other life roles. Another assignment that is effective is for clients to record their negative and positive self-talk for a specified period and discuss findings with their counselor.

When Ricardo began to show evidence of improving his faulty thinking, the counselor introduced career counseling that is based on cognitive information processing. She chose a counseling program that was consistent with the personal counseling procedures that focused on cognitive processes. Ricardo agreed that he was now prepared to consider job opportunities that were available. He explained that he was fully aware of high unemployment rates and that the recession was responsible for his job loss. He informed the counselor that he was ready to choose the best job available but agreed that the assessment instruments the counselor had mentioned would be a good start for exploring job opportunities.

An aptitude, interest inventory, skills identification exercise, and values inventory results indicated that Ricardo had very good basic skills, a high interest in realistic occupations, and he values creativity, independence, and variety. The results of each inventory were thoroughly discussed and Ricardo appeared satisfied with the conclusion he would search for jobs that are considered to be skilled trades. He was very open to improving his skills through education or as an apprentice. He also recognized that because of a severe downturn in the economy, his choices for finding a job were very limited. Ricardo also learned that dysfunctional thinking can cause problems in all life roles. He recognized the interrelationship between life roles in that what happens in one life role can affect what happens in the others.

Ricardo was now receiving financial assistance from a government agency to help meet the needs of his family until he finds employment. He continued to see his counselor for support of maintaining a positive approach to his situation, but he admitted that it was difficult to feel encouraged when he failed to land a job. It is important to point out here that career choice is indeed limited during economic downturns and when jobs are outsourced to other locations. The client who wishes to remain or is forced to remain in their current location is limited to a choice of the best job available. One does not necessarily give up hope for his or her ideal job of the future but obviously must delay options in an attempt to secure work that will put food on the table. It is clear that in certain circumstances the career choice process must address more than just psychological variables. The opportunities for work and the nature of work are both parts of a changing process that must also be addressed in career counseling as well as in personal counseling. In the future one can expect to experience both good economic times as well as stressful periods when there is a downturn in the economy.
In Ricardo’s case he was able to find part-time employment in two different firms. He learned that keeping a positive attitude was most important for his own health and feelings of well-being as well as being a consistent and dependable worker. His outlook for the future was that of “cautious optimism.” He has hopes of landing a full-time job with one of his current employers or finding a full-time job with other employers he has contacted. In the next case study the stress associated with the possibility of losing one’s job during economic downturns dominates a client’s lifestyle.

Case 13.2 Diane’s Reactions to the Threat of Job Loss

Diane’s stress level escalated when workers in a plant near where she worked began to lose their jobs because of poor economic conditions. Her thoughts were focused on what she would do to care for her children if she lost her job. She was unable to sleep most nights and her days were filled with worrying about the future—eventually her anxiety level peaked. A depressive episode followed with the usual symptoms of emotional flatness, poor memory, loss of self-esteem, and exaggerated self-blame and guilt. In essence, her fear of the future and reaction to stress and anxiety triggered biological, psychological, and social influences that led to a depressive reaction as depicted in Figure 13.5.

Diane’s clinical social worker, hereafter referred to as counselor, conducted an intake interview. Diane is a 26-year-old African American who is the single mother of two children, a boy age 7 and a girl age 5. She currently lives alone with her children in an apartment complex that is government sponsored. When she is at work, her children are cared for by a relative. Diane is a hard worker and is known as being dependable and competent. As a result she has received pay increases on a regular basis at an assembly plant not far from where she lives. Her commitment to her work has made it difficult for Diane to even think about the prospect of being terminated and she could not stop worrying.

What we have here is an example of how fear and anxiety can trigger the development of a mood disorder. Diane has not been fired; in fact no one at the plant where she works has been terminated at this point even though the economy has taken a nose dive. No doubt Diane is not the only person who is worried about the possibility of being terminated, but the difference here is in the severity of her reactions. The counselor wanted more answers as to why Diane has reacted so severely to a potential future event. The counselor realized, however, that even workers whose jobs are not even threatened but think they are develop high levels of stress, especially if they are focused on emotional coping strategies (Mantler et al., 2005).

Diane grew up in a neighborhood that was known for its violence and drug-related crimes. She dropped out of high school when she became pregnant but later finished a high school equivalence program. Diane stated that she liked going back to school and in fact would like to continue with her education. In the meantime her work experience has been most rewarding and she is very committed to her work. All who know her agree that it would be extremely difficult for her to give up what she has earned for another job. The counselor decided to approach Diane with the prospect of searching for other work that may be just as rewarding in case her current job is terminated, but the first counseling step is to further evaluate Diane’s current concerns. To accomplish this task the counselor recommended the use of carefully selected assessment instruments. The counselor will ask Diane to join her in selecting all instruments and she will carefully explain their purpose and how they may address her current concerns. The following assessment instruments were selected:

- Informal checklist of concerns
- Substance Abuse Subtle Screening Inventory 3 (Miller, 1997)
- Beck Depression Inventory-II (BDI) (Beck, Street & Brown, 1996)
- Career Thoughts Inventory (CTI) (Sampson et al., 1996a)
- My Vocational Situation (MVS) (Holland et al., 1980)
- Self-Directed Search (SDS) (Holland, 1994a)
- The Values Scale (VS) (Nevill & Super, 1989)

The results of an aptitude test Diane recently took will also be used.
The informal checklist of concerns is a nonstandardized list of problems that a client checks to indicate if they are currently experiencing the concerns listed. It is not to be considered a standardized inventory from which one can interpret score results from a norm sample. Counselors often use the checklist as a counseling tool that helps open the door for discussions of depression, anxiety, financial concerns, binge eating, and obsessive thinking, for example. Some agencies construct their own list based on previous experiences. Counselors scan the list of items checked for possible problems that will need to be validated by other more valid and reliable information.

A substance abuse inventory is often used as a screening instrument, especially if a client has a history of drug use or has been involved in drug-related activities. In the case of Diane, she informed the counselor that she has used alcohol and drugs recreationally in the past but has stayed away from both since becoming a mother. The counselor decided that since there was known history of substance abuse she would make certain that drugs or alcohol were not a part of the current problem. Diane quickly agreed and wanted to prove she was telling the truth.

The next two instruments, the CTI and the BDI-II, are used to evaluate dysfunctional thinking and the severity of depression observed during the interview. The counselor wanted more specific information to use for interventions that will address a depressive reaction. The CTI is interpreted by using three scales Decision-Making Confusion, Commitment Anxiety, and External Conflict plus a total score. These scores will aid the counselor in determining readiness for career counseling and
specifically if one is ready for career decision making. Diane’s score on the BDI-II will provide an index of the severity of depression. The remaining three assessment instruments in the list will be used when Diane is able to begin career counseling.

**Diane’s Progress**

Diane’s reaction to counseling assistance was very positive. She seemed relieved when she able to explain why her reaction to recent events was so emotionally charged. She stated, “When I was growing up we often did not have enough to eat and I wanted out of there—anywhere else would do—just let me out!” She explained that similar thoughts stayed with her all these years and provided motivation for self-improvement and her commitment to a job that provided the means to a better life. She admitted making significant mistakes along the way, but now she was heading in the right direction and didn’t want anything to get in the way. “I just couldn’t handle the threat of losing my source of independence,” she stated. After further discussions, some of the selected assessment instruments were administered.

The results indicated that Diane was not likely to be currently involved in using drugs or excessively using alcohol. The counselor was cautious, however, in that she planned to be on guard for any signs of substance abuse problems. The CTI results indicated that Diane may have some problems in sustaining the decision-making process, more than likely due to her current emotional problems. There were also indications that generalized anxiety may interfere with her ability to commit to an occupational choice. These results support the position that Diane has needs of a personal nature that should be addressed before career counseling. The following interventions were discussed with Diane and she agreed to participate to the best of her ability.

Systematic desensitization involves challenging anxiety-response behaviors through imagery while the client is in a state of physical relaxation. The counselor makes the point that feelings of anxiety have been learned and the goal here is to unlearn anxiety-provoking thoughts so they will no longer be stressful. The client is given instructions on relaxation techniques by Wolpe (1958) and is asked to practice them on a regular basis as homework. In addition anxiety-provoking situations are developed by client and counselor; for example, learning that she may lose her job in the future, searching for another job, having to move, and job loss will be used as focal points. The procedure is explained by steps: (1) Learn relaxation procedures; (2) when completely relaxed, visualize an anxiety-provoking situation without increasing muscle tension; and (3) repeat imagining other anxiety-provoking thoughts while staying relaxed, complete one’s list without feeling muscle tension. To complete the entire list will usually require several sessions.

Cognitive-behavioral counseling includes strategies that address both thinking and behavioral procedures. The rationale here is that thinking must be changed before effective behavior can occur. These procedures consist of learning positive-oriented thinking and require homework assignments and follow-up. Clients need repeated exercises in which they identify thoughts and statements that are negative and are associated with stressful feelings. They are to constantly challenge their thoughts with reality checks. In the case of Diane, the chances of losing her job are unknown because of changing financial conditions. Thus one may be worried about an unknown future, but Diane’s thoughts went beyond that point as she visualized everything in the future as being negative. The counselor’s goal was to address negative-oriented thinking and self-talk and find solutions for future considerations. Other cognitive-behavioral techniques were summarized earlier in this chapter.

**Using Data Integration**

Diane began career counseling when she was able to relax and make rational decisions. The counselor introduced the strategy component of experience identification and educational training and planning to encourage Diane to openly express her needs. She claimed she was ready to consider other work opportunities realistically without interference from emotional reactions and severe negative thoughts. She was administered the inventory My Vocational Situation which identifies difficulties with lack of vocational identity, lack of information and training, and environmental or personal barriers that may affect a person’s ability to make career decisions. Diane had low scores on all three scales, indicating potential problems in making a career choice and processing career information. Her low score on vocational identity which identifies the clarity of personal goals and self-perceptions should not be surprising. One of the counselor’s major goals is to help Diane discover and, more importantly, become aware of the significance of her interests, values, and aptitudes as well as learning more about occupational choices. There is a definite need for Diane to
learn more about occupational information and subsequent training programs. One could name a number of environmental barriers she has experienced that have limited her access to occupational information and career opportunities. In Diane’s case, life was all about survival rather than considering job opportunities that were desirable and interesting. A different perspective introduced by the counselor will include how to locate and process information about occupations, awareness of the importance of self-knowledge, and how to project one’s abilities and interests into a work environment. Another most relevant point is learning to assess the future prospects of occupations one is considering; Diane is especially interested in work that has a future. The next inventory includes a measure of one’s interests. The Self Directed Search yields scores regarding Occupational Daydreams, Preferences for Activities, Competencies, Preferences for Kinds of Occupations, and Abilities in Various Occupations. The scores yield summary codes according to Holland’s typology structure that was discussed in chapters 2 and 3. Diane’s scores yielded the summary codes of SCR—Social, Conventional, and Realistic. The counselor will use this information to locate specific occupations for consideration, for example, professional nurse is listed as a prospective occupation for someone with a high score in the Social domain. Clients are to compile a list of occupations to consider.

The Values Scale yields scores for the following values:

- Ability Utilization
- Achievement
- Altruism
- Autonomy
- Creativity
- Economic Rewards
- Lifestyle
- Physical Activity
- Prestige
- Risk
- Social Interaction
- Variety
- Working Conditions

Diane’s score results indicate that her highest value expectations as measured by this scale are Social Interaction, Working Conditions, Achievement, and Variety. The high score on the Social Interaction scale is a strong indication that she enjoys working with others. Working Conditions as the name of this scale implies that it is important for her to have a workplace that is attractive, operational, and pleasant. The feeling that one has produced good results is associated with the value of Achievement. A workplace that provides one the opportunity to do different tasks suggests one values Variety.

The score results from the aptitude test Diane had taken earlier—the Differential Aptitude Test (Bennett, Seashore, & Wesman, 1991)—includes the following subtests:

- Verbal Reasoning
- Numerical Reasoning
- Abstract Reasoning
- Perceptual Speed and Accuracy
- Mechanical Reasoning
- Space Relations
- Spelling
- Language Usage
- Scholastic Ability

Diane’s highest scores in the above-average range were verbal and numerical reasoning and language usage. These scores are a good index for scholastic aptitude. None of her scores on this test were significantly low scores.

Conceptualization of Diane’s Concerns in Four Domains

The following conceptualization of Diane’s concerns incorporates information from the interview and test data as follows:

Career

In the early stages of counseling with Diane, it became obvious that she had personal problems involving depression and dysfunctional thinking that were to be addressed through cognitive-behavioral techniques before career counseling could take place. This assumption was verified with valid assessment instruments that indicated a mild depressive reaction, an inability to sustain the career decision process, and the indications of generalized anxiety—all of which interfered with her ability to process information. Following interventions designed to address faulty cognitions and demeaning self-talk, Diane was able to begin career counseling. In a working consensus relationship between client and counselor, several assessment instruments were selected, administered, and scored. These score results are used to assist Diane in the decision process. She will be introduced to available career information in a local community college. The counselor and Diane will continue discussions concerning the processing of information and how to further evaluate potential career choices.

Affective

There is considerable improvement in Diane’s emotional control compared to when she first entered counseling. Although there are periods of disruptive thinking, Diane continues to make progress. She will
be carefully monitored during career decision making. Diane reacted positively when she was given the opportunity to vent her feelings and connect them with events and situational influences from her environment. Currently she appears to be emotionally stable.

**Cognitive-Behavioral**

Diane has made progress in addressing automatic reactions to stress that were primarily negative. She has learned that negative thoughts and anxiety can lead to psychological disorders that are very domineering. She is also continuing her efforts to improve feelings of well-being through a variety of homework assignments and relaxation techniques. She will continue to be monitored and encouraged to develop self-enhancing thoughts rather than negative ones.

**Culture**

Diane self-identifies as an African American woman who endorses some traditional values such as support from friends from her church and other groups who are considered as “sisters and brothers.” She has been subjected to discrimination and oppression from the White majority as well as other minority groups. On the other hand, she is most appreciative of work opportunities that gave her the opportunity to prove she is indeed capable of achieving a better life. She is making a substantial effort to view the future as positive even though there will be hurdles to overcome along the way.

The counselor reminded Diane that assessment data is used to help individuals in the career choice process and is not the final word to determine a career or careers one is to choose. It is therefore most important to keep in mind that career choice is an individual matter and in effect it will be Diane’s call that will decide her future work role. Assessment results are to be considered as only one part of the choice process which presents significant information for career exploration.

The counselor informed Diane that scores and their meaning will be explained for each assessment instrument. Together they will observe any patterns or preferences for work environments that are to be considered as potential choices. As Diane and the counselor discussed the results, Diane recorded information for further exploration. One of the work environments that was of particular interest was health services. She made a note that Social was her highest interest level and she valued social interactions. She was also inspired to consider health services because she had read about the growing need for qualified individuals in health care.

What followed were sessions with her counselor that involved discussions about the possibility of becoming a nurse. Diane made a visit to a facility that trained licensed vocational nurses for more information. After several more visits with her counselor, she decided to continue with her current work role and also attend classes for licensed vocational nurse training. Her major goal was to become a registered nurse.

This case is a good example of integrating career and personal counseling. In Diane’s case, she was successful as well as pleased with her current job, but when the economic downturn happened and her job was threatened, she fell apart when her stress level became unbearable. In many ways the self-confidence that Diane had created began to fall apart and she once again felt vulnerable to the harsh environment she had experienced as a child. Her thoughts became familiar ones, such as fear and panic as her future became even more unpredictable. The depressive reaction such as the one Diane experienced must be addressed before one begins the career counseling process. Counselors are to view depression and other psychological disorders as barriers to the career choice process that must be removed or moderated. This suggestion has been on the books for a considerable time and no doubt some counseling programs have addressed similar issues in the past. What we need now is a change in the established perception that career counselors are to address only career-related issues clients bring to counseling; that indeed may be the counselor’s intent because of current training programs. I am not suggesting that career counselors take on all clients who have personal problems—one is to make a referral when they do not have the training to address a client’s problem. What I am suggesting is that training programs should recognize the growing awareness of the interrelationships of concerns clients bring to counseling.
Chapter 13 • Career Transitions and Job Loss

These two cases are examples of integrating career and personal counseling. The tightly woven connection between work and mental health suggests that counselors are to address both—not limit their ability to address an array of personal issues. Job loss is obviously a major problem for many workers during a recession, but job loss also occurs on a fairly regular basis, such as during catastrophic events, outsourcing of jobs to other countries, changes in production of goods, new technology, and even when there are indications of a downturn in the economy. One can expect to find stress-related reactions that can lead to emotional instability as in the case of Ricardo or depressive reactions as in the case of Diane. These two case examples make it clear that neither client was prepared for the career choice process; their personal concerns were barriers to processing information and making optimal decisions. In these two cases, as in others, personal concerns are to be addressed before career counseling.

Summary

1. Changing work roles are unavoidable for many in the workforce. The flexibility to adjust and adapt to different work environments will characterize future workers. Some workers will choose to change jobs while others will be forced to. The rate of unemployment during recessions can affect many American lives.

2. Job loss concerns can produce severe stress and anxiety that can lead to the development of a psychological disorder. One’s sense of well-being and self-worth can be diminished.

3. In the case of Ricardo, he blamed himself for losing his job even though his loss was due to poor economic conditions. He overreacted to a false sense of failure to the point that he became emotionally unstable. Personal counseling preceded career counseling in order to address faulty cognitions; systematic logical thinking is inhibited by faulty cognitions. Readiness for career counseling was measured by selected standardized assessment instruments.

4. In the case of Diane, she became overwhelmed with the possibility of job loss due to poor economic conditions. Fear and anxiety triggered the development of a mood disorder. Several assessment instruments were chosen to assess the severity of Diane’s concerns. Systematic desensitization among other cognitive-behavioral techniques helped Diane control anxiety. Negative-oriented thinking was also addressed. Career counseling included the use of a battery of assessment instruments to enhance self-knowledge and methods of making an optimal career decision. Diane wanted to consider occupations that will be in demand and have the potential for growth in the future.

Supplementary Learning Exercises and Two Case Studies

1. How would you inform your client of the possibility of changing work roles in the future? Explain causal factors.

2. Compile a list of suggestions your client could use to prepare for the future job market. Share with classmate.

3. Explain the possible causes of work stress and how to overcome them.

4. Rank-order by most important Jahado’s five unintended consequences of work. Defend your rankings.

5. How would you advise a client to overcome stress associated with job insecurity?
Case 13.3  Al’s Job Loss

Al drove a truck and delivered food products to local restaurants in the city for 5 years. His job was terminated when a number of his customers closed their businesses because of a severe drop in revenue. Al, a 32-year-old Caucasian, was married and the father of three children. Al went to a community mental health center for help; they had helped him in the past when he was arrested for fighting. Al told the counselor he completed high school and one semester in a community college. His previous work experience included plumber’s helper and he worked on construction jobs. The mental health counselor read his file and discovered that Al was not diagnosed with a psychological disorder but had symptoms of poor emotional control, underlying hostility, and low self-esteem. Al told the counselor that he had not been in trouble since the fighting incident but admitted that he was easily provoked and had to struggle to control his emotions.

Questions and Exercises for Discussion

1. What would you do next if you were his counselor?
2. What assessment instruments would you use if any?
3. What would be your major counseling focus?
4. How would you determine the counseling sequence?
5. Should Al receive career and personal counseling simultaneously? Defend your answer.

Case 13.4  Olivia’s Job Loss

Olivia told the clinical social worker that she had lost her job as a bookkeeper in a local bank. She had been employed at the bank in the real estate loan division for only a few months. Olivia is a 22-year-old Hispanic who is single and has never married. She attended a local community college for 2 years and was a business major. Her past work experience was mainly part-time jobs at a grocery and clothing store. When asked about grades she made in college, Olivia explained that she made failing grades in some courses because of ill health. Further explanations revealed that Olivia believes she has a serious illness that her doctors cannot find. “I have pains in my side that move from one side to the other yet the doctor said I am in good health.” Olivia also stated that she feels fine now and is prepared to take on another job. When the counselor asked if she would be interested in a job that is open with a well-known firm, Olivia told her she could not take that job because she cannot use an elevator. “I get scared when I am in enclosed places”, she replied.

Questions and Exercises for Discussion

1. What action would you take at this point in the interview?
2. What are your tentative conclusions?
3. What assessment instruments would you use to determine if Olivia is ready for career counseling?
4. How would you conceptualize Olivia’s current mental health?
5. Describe how personal and career concerns are intertwined in this case.