

Explore



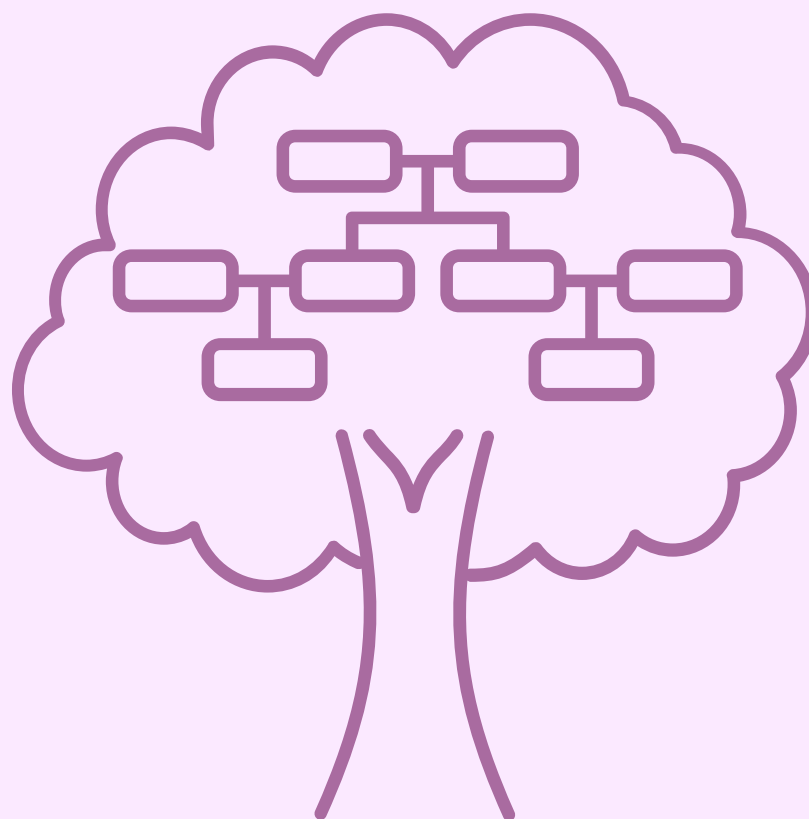
# Career Genealogy

A Self-help Tool

## Introduction

Families are the source of many important ideas and values that we have. As we grow up, we inherit powerful ideas from our family. Seeing as we grow up with these ideas, they can seem natural, and common sense. It is almost as if they were the only ideas we could have, when, in reality, there are other ideas out there. Ideas that are taken for granted are rarely examined. Yet, all the time they will be there, shaping our mental landscape like the rocks and soil beneath our feet. Often the messages will be positive and empowering, and open up options. Sometimes, the messages we get may emphasise one aspect of work over another. Occasionally, the messages may be limiting, or even discouraging.

This exercise invites you to think about the hidden messages about jobs, work and careers that you've gained from your family, and what you've learnt from your family traditions. These messages might be to do with what jobs are really like; about expectations and aspirations; or what sort of occupations are 'good' careers. Spending a few minutes reflecting on the hidden messages we've received can be surprising, revealing, and will help you understand yourself better.



## **This tool is designed to...**

- Reveal the ideas about the world of work that you've grown up with.
- Help you understand what beliefs and values shape your outlook.
- Help you consider which ideas about work are helpful for you to hold on to.

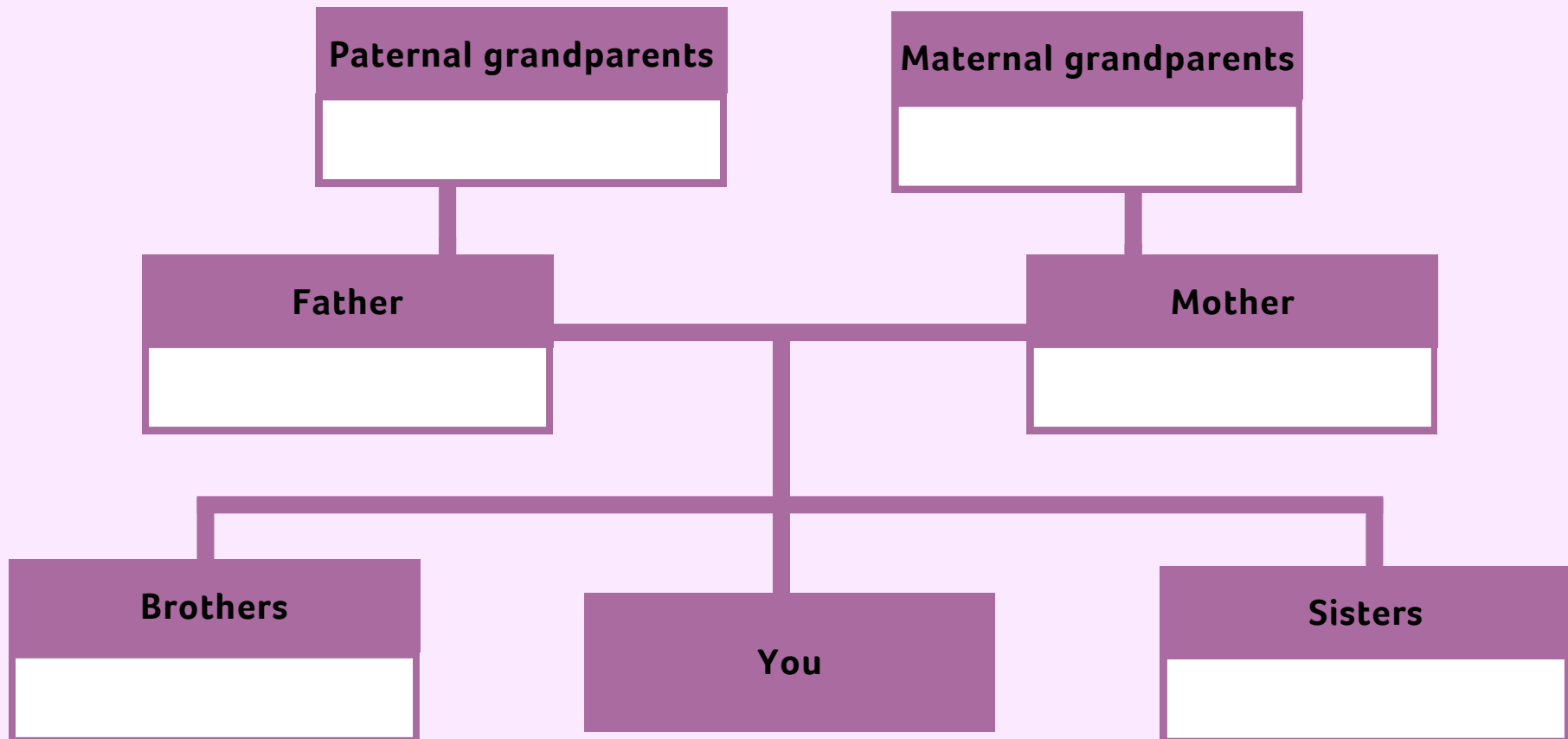
## **Consider using this tool if you...**

- Have always assumed that the ideas you've got about careers are 'obviously' right.
- Want to gain a deeper insight into the things that have shaped your outlook on life.
- Wonder if other possible ideas might better fit your authentic self.

# How to use this tool

## 1 Make a family 'careers' tree

You should include your parents/carers, and their parents. If Uncles and Aunts are important influences, add them in. If you have adult brothers or sisters who you look up to, include them too. We've put a blank example below, to show what this could look like, with interactive boxes for you to write in.



## 2 Add key details about their work, and their view of work

Start by adding what you know about what they do now (or did in the past if they've changed jobs). Include non-paid work such as being a homemaker, and being retired.

What do you know about their job?

- Do you know how they got their job?
- Do you know why they chose their job?
- What is their job like?
- What sorts of things do they do in their job?
- What do they like/dislike about their job?
- What impression have you gained about their job? (e.g. Do they consider their job to be interesting/boring; well-paid/poorly paid; enjoyable/unpleasant, etc.)
- Do you know what else they would do (or have done) if they had the chance?

### 3 Add any messages about the world of work

Add the messages you have learnt about the world of work, jobs and careers, about what they're really like; about what matters; and what constitutes 'success'. 'Messages' may be things like 'You should do what you love', or 'A job is just a way of paying the mortgage'.

Here are some examples of other messages about the world of work:

- Work hard – play hard.
- I've been educated in the 'university of life'.
- You should get a steady job.
- You should get a job with good prospects.
- Move on up and move on out.
- You should stay true to your roots.

**“Be successful”**

**“Be yourself”**

**“Be happy”**

Messages can come from different sources. While conversations are the most obvious source of messages, behaviours and actions that imply beliefs, ideas or values can also be a source. For instance, your parents may have worked long hours because providing for the family was an important value for them. Or you may have framed graduation photos displayed in your house, which ‘says’ how your family values formal educational achievement.

Some ways that messages may be conveyed include:

- Things people have told you about their jobs.
- Things you’ve observed about how people have experienced their jobs.
- Family sayings about work and success.
- Jokes, stories and anecdotes.
- Beliefs and ideas that your family subscribes to.
- Actions and behaviours.



The following reflective questions are adapted from those recommended by the leading career coach and Senior Lecturer, Julia Yates (2019, p.29). These are provided for you to consider, but don't feel you have to answer all of them – just pick out the ones that resonate with you.

- What in your family was seen as women's work / men's work?
- What jobs were admired / not admired?
- How does your family see career success?
- Who do you see as most successful – why?
- Are there any repeated patterns or themes in the career stories of your family?
- Does everyone in your family have the same view, or is there a range of ideas?
- Who do you feel you are most alike?
- Who would you like to be most alike?
- Is there anyone outside your family, who has the sort of career and attitude towards work that really inspires you?
- How are you similar / different to your family?
- How have the ideas about work changed across the generations?
- Which ideas about career success do you find relevant / helpful for you?
- Which ideas about career success do you find less relevant / helpful for you?



# Pause, Reflect, Act

- What are the key insights you've taken from this Self-help Tool?
- What actions do you need to take now, to build on this exercise?
- Who could help you with this?
- Are there other, related Self-help Tools you'd like to use as well?

**NB: Because everyone is different, no one solution is a magic bullet, so please look at our other Self-help Tools as well, and use the ones that work best for you.**

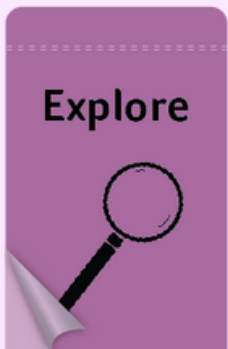
- Expectations Under the Microscope – using your values as a 'touchstone' to test the different things people expect you to do.
- Eye of the Storm – examining the different messages from society about what your career 'should' be like.
- Unique Me - identifying your values, interests and characteristics, that form your authentic self.

# References and Resources

McLeod, S. (2016). Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory. Simply Psychology. Retrieved July 6th, 2023, from <https://www.simplypsychology.org/bandura.html>

Yates, J. (2019). The Career Coaching Toolkit. Routledge.

D. Stanbury, 2023



If you are a member of staff from another educational organisation and want to use a limited number of our Self-help Tools with your students, we would love to hear from you and share good practice. We would ask that you retain references to University of Huddersfield as a matter of courtesy, and acknowledge the other sources we have used. Thank you.