

STRATEGIES FOR DISCERNING AND LIVING A CALLING

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In our experience, it is common in career counseling to hear clients talk about wanting to discover and live out a calling. The term *calling* means different things to different people. Typically, calling refers to a personally or socially meaningful engagement with one's work, sometimes linked to one's religious or spiritual perspective, sometimes to a sense of passion or giftedness, and sometimes to a deeply held set of values for making a difference or leaving a legacy. Whatever the particulars, the concept seems very powerful when expressed through a client's tone of despair, longing, or hope. We have worked with many objectively successful but subjectively miserable middle-career adult clients who have fantasized about what it would be like to experience work as a calling rather than as an obligation to which they felt chained (sometimes with "golden handcuffs"). Interactions with clients such as these are part of what has driven us to devote much of our careers to better understanding what it means to have a calling, the difference it makes (in work and life) for people who approach work as a calling, and strategies for discerning and living out a calling.

Although much has yet to be learned, what is clear from research is that a sense of calling provides, for many people, a key pathway for experiencing work and life as meaningful and satisfying (e.g., Dik, Eldridge, Steger, & Duffy, 2012; Dik, Sargent, & Steger, 2008; Duffy & Sedlacek, 2007; Hirschi, 2012). How, then, might career development practitioners help clients discern and live out a calling? In this chapter, we offer some suggestions that address this question. We begin with an overview of the

historical and conceptual context for the recent surge of scholarly interest in calling. We then summarize the rapidly accumulating research on the construct and explore implications for career interventions that target discerning and living out a calling. To close the chapter, we use a case study to demonstrate the use of calling in career counseling.

HISTORICAL AND DEFINITIONAL CONTEXT

Applied to the work domain, the term *calling* is perhaps best conceptualized as a mindset, orientation, or perspective that people, groups, or cultures use to make sense of their labor. Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, and Tipton (1986), in their book *Habits of the Heart*, first proposed a tripartite distinction among job, career, and calling orientations. Those with a job orientation view work in purely utilitarian terms, as little more than a means to a paycheck. Those with a career orientation view work in terms of the achievement needs they can satisfy in their quest for promotions, pay, and power. In contrast, those with a calling orientation focus on the work itself as having intrinsic value that links to a broader purpose, most notably enhancing the common good.

These orientations are reflected in shared cultural perspectives on work that have morphed over the centuries in Western history (Hardy, 1990). For example, the ancient Greeks viewed work as a curse. This fit with their dualistic worldview beliefs that drew lines between the sacred–pure (the life of the

mind) and the secular–banal (physical, manual toil). Philosophers were at the pinnacle of their society, occupying the top of a social hierarchy that made indulging the life of the mind possible, but only on the backs of those cursed with having to do the practical work that needed doing (e.g., slaves). In contrast, during the Renaissance, work was viewed not as what made people like animals but rather as what distinguished them from animals. Engaging in creative work with their near-limitless resources for correcting and improving nature allowed people to imitate God, who was described with phrases such as *Mightiest Architect* and *Supreme Maker*. The dualist view of the Greeks became entrenched in Western thought and is still evident in how jobs are organized in a prestige pecking order, whereas the Renaissance path toward self-realization seems echoed in contemporary careerism and the push toward self-focused personal fulfillment.

The view that work can be approached as a calling offers a middle path between these extremes. The notion that any honest area of work can have spiritual significance dates to at least the Protestant Reformation, when the likes of Martin Luther advocated a worldview in which efforts within any morally legitimate (not evil) job could glorify God and serve the common good. For John Calvin and later for the Puritans, one key basis for discerning a calling was by attending to one's gifts and talents and identifying ways in which they could be put to use for both making a living and serving the common good and well-being of society. This way of understanding calling is reflected today when people describe a sense of destiny and duty (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009) or when a sense of calling is tied to one's religious or spiritual beliefs (Dik, Duffy, & Tix, 2012). This perspective on calling is also invoked in Dik and Duffy's (2009) definition of the term as "a transcendent summons . . . to approach a particular life role in a manner oriented toward demonstrating or deriving a sense of purpose or meaningfulness and that holds other-oriented values and goals as primary sources of motivation" (p. 427). Such a definition aligns with the neoclassical understanding of the term, in contrast to the modern view (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009), which instead frames a calling in terms of an inner drive

toward self-fulfillment (e.g., Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011; Hall & Chandler, 2005).

Scholarship on approaching work as a calling has a long history within the humanities. However, when social scientists began to devise ways to measure the construct, the question of definitions began to engender some debate. Neoclassical and modern constitute one distinction, but scholars also differ on whether a calling is sacred or secular (e.g., Steger, Pickering, Shin, & Dik, 2010) or whether it is unidimensional or multidimensional (e.g., Dik & Duffy, 2009; Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011; Elangovan, Pinder, & McLean, 2010; Pratt, Pradies, & Lepisto, 2013). Some studies have begun to explore the dimensionality of the construct (e.g., Dik, Eldridge, et al., 2012; Hagmaier & Abele, 2012; Hirschi, 2011; Hunter, Dik, & Banning, 2010), a matter for more research to address. Ultimately, how calling is best defined is more a linguistic question than a scientific one. Fortunately, to date, results across research studies have perhaps been surprisingly consistent despite diverse definitions of the term, as we review next.

RESEARCH ON CALLING

Career interventions that attend to the concept of calling have a rapidly growing body of research that provides empirical context. Over the past 5 years, more than 50 studies have been conducted on the topic of calling, and the upward trajectory shows no signs of slowing. In the sections that follow, we provide a brief summary of recent trends in this area of research (for more detail, see Duffy & Dik, 2013).

Recent Trends

To date, research on calling has generally explored how it connects to career development, work, and well-being outcomes. Studies with samples of primarily college students have demonstrated the connection of calling to variables important to the career development process. Namely, perceiving a calling to a particular line of work has consistently been connected with a stronger sense of vocational self-clarity. With more than 3,000 1st-year college students, Duffy and Sedlacek (2007) found having a calling to strongly correlate with being decided and

comfortable with one's career choice, as well as feeling clear about one's vocational preferences. The link of calling to decidedness was corroborated by Steger et al. (2010) with another sample of U.S. college students and by Hirschi and Hermann (2012), who found calling to be correlated with vocational identity in a sample of German college students. Other research with samples of U.S. (Dik et al., 2008) and Canadian (Domene, 2012) college students found perceiving a calling to link with greater career decision self-efficacy and outcome expectations. To summarize, results from this group of studies suggest that college students who endorse a calling display more positive indicators of career maturity.

Research with working adults has also found connections between perceiving a calling and positive work-related outcomes. Working adults with a calling tend to be more committed to their careers and organizations. For example, Duffy, Dik, and Steger (2011) surveyed university employees and found that calling correlated with career commitment, organizational commitment, and lower withdrawal intentions. They also found that career commitment functioned as a mediator of the link between calling and organizational commitment and withdrawal intentions. With other samples of working adults, researchers found that calling was associated with career commitment (Duffy, Allan, Autin, & Bott, 2013; Duffy, Bott, Allan, Torrey, & Dik, 2012) and both organizational commitment and turnover intentions (Cardador, Dane, & Pratt, 2011). Working adults with a calling also tend to view their work as more meaningful. With U.S. (Duffy et al., 2013; Duffy, Bott, et al., 2012) and German (Hirschi, 2012) samples, working adults endorsing a calling were more likely to view their work as meaningful. In sum, for working adults, viewing one's career as a calling is linked to career and organizational commitment and increased work meaning.

For both college students and working adults, calling is associated with satisfaction in the academic or work domains. For example, one study found calling to moderately correlate with academic satisfaction among a sample of 312 undergraduate students and found that increased career decision self-efficacy and work hope explained this link

(Duffy, Allan, & Dik, 2011). Most studies, however, have focused on satisfaction within the work domain. Early categorical studies (Davidson & Caddell, 1994; Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, & Schwartz, 1997) and later qualitative studies (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Duffy, Foley, et al., 2012; E. F. Hernandez, Foley, & Beitin, 2011) have demonstrated that individuals who view their work as a calling are very satisfied with their work, especially in comparison with those who view their work as a job or career.

A series of more rigorous empirical studies have replicated and extended these results. With samples of working adults across a range of income levels and educational attainment levels, perceiving a calling has consistently been associated with job satisfaction at a moderate or strong level (Duffy et al., 2013; Duffy, Bott, et al., 2012; Duffy, Dik, & Steger, 2011; Hagmaier & Abele, 2012; Harzer & Ruch, 2012; Peterson, Park, Hall, & Seligman, 2009). Two studies have attempted to examine why this relation exists—that is, what mechanisms help explain why calling links to greater job satisfaction. Duffy, Dik, and Steger (2011) found career commitment to mediate the link of calling to job satisfaction, and Duffy, Bott, et al. (2012) found that this link was mediated by career commitment and work meaning. In sum, perceiving a calling is correlated with greater academic and job satisfaction. The link to academic satisfaction may be due to increased career decision self-efficacy and work hope, and the link to job satisfaction may be due to increased work meaning and career commitment.

Finally, scholars have assessed how calling is related to well-being, namely life meaning and life satisfaction. With large samples of undergraduate students, three studies found perceiving a calling to weakly correlate with life satisfaction and moderately correlate with life meaning (Duffy, Allan, & Bott, 2012; Duffy & Sedlacek, 2010; Steger et al., 2010). Similar results were found with 1st- and 3rd-year medical students (Duffy, Manuel, Borges, & Bott, 2011). For adults, categorical studies by Davidson and Caddell (1994) and Wrzesniewski et al. (1997) each showed that adults in the calling group were more satisfied with life than those in other groups, and in an empirical study with almost

10,000 employed adults, Peterson et al. (2009) found that perceiving a calling moderately correlated with life satisfaction and zest for life. Qualitative studies with groups of psychologists (Duffy, Foley, et al., 2012), zookeepers (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009), and religious adults (E. F. Hernandez et al., 2011) have each confirmed that people with a calling tend to be satisfied with their lives.

Two studies attempted to explain the relation between perceiving a calling and life satisfaction. With a group of college students, Steger et al. (2010) found life meaning to mediate this relation regardless of a student's level of religious commitment. With another group of college students, Duffy, Allan, and Bott (2012) found life meaning and academic satisfaction to fully mediate the relation of perceiving a calling to life satisfaction. Students who perceived a calling were more satisfied in life because they had greater life meaning and satisfaction in the academic domain. To summarize, perceiving a calling consistently links to greater life meaning and life satisfaction, and life meaning and domain satisfaction may function as mediators of the link between calling and life satisfaction.

Perceiving Versus Living a Calling

All of the research reviewed above has focused on the degree to which individuals perceive a calling to a particular line of work. However, recent research has unveiled an important distinction between perceiving a calling and living a calling. Several studies that have measured both constructs have found that living a calling is a significantly more robust correlate with career, work, and well-being outcomes than is perceiving a calling (Duffy et al., 2013; Duffy, Allan, & Bott, 2012; Duffy, Bott, et al., 2012). One of these studies found that living a calling moderated the link between perceiving a calling and work meaning and career commitment, such that this link was only significant for those who were currently living out their calling (Duffy, Bott, et al., 2012). Another study found living a calling to fully mediate the link between perceiving a calling and life satisfaction, indicating that calling related to life satisfaction because of living out that calling (Duffy et al., 2013). Whether as a mediator or

moderator, it appears that the link between perceiving a calling and positive work and well-being outcomes for adults may be predicated on actually living out that calling.

Two studies have explored what might account for the link between perceiving a calling and living a calling. Duffy et al. (2013) and Duffy and Autin (2013) each found that across levels of income and educational attainment, there was no difference in the perception of a calling. However, individuals with higher incomes and levels of education were more likely to be living a calling. Duffy and Autin also found work volition to partially mediate the link between perceiving a calling and living a calling, suggesting that part of why individuals were more likely to live a calling was the increased control they experienced in their career decision making. In sum, the perception of a calling is relatively equal across income and educational groups, but it may be that individuals with more privilege and ability to choose desired occupations are more likely to actually live out a calling.

INTERVENTIONS FOR DISCERNING AND LIVING A CALLING

When facilitating career interventions with clients who resonate with the construct, a sense of calling is valuable to cultivate, particularly given its consistent links in research with work-related and general well-being. The concept of calling overlaps with, or is related to, variables such as eudaimonic well-being, purpose, meaningfulness, prosocial attitudes, intrinsic motivation, and workplace spirituality. All major theories of career choice and development (e.g., person–environment fit, developmental, social-cognitive, constructivist) incorporate constructs such as these, although some more directly than others (see Dik & Duffy, 2014; Dik, Duffy, & Eldridge, 2009). In part for this reason, and in part because research on calling is still new and growing, we have generally viewed a sense of calling as a complementary construct that can supplement and enhance already-established models of career intervention. One advantage of this stance is that practical applications of the construct can be adapted for use in essentially any reasonable career counseling

strategy. With many clients, the construct may serve not as an add-on but as a metaperspective or mindset to which multiple theoretical paradigms can link.

The concept of calling has several points of distinction, most notably its close ties to religion, spirituality, and existential concerns; its focus on eudaimonic rather than hedonic well-being; and its value for contributions to the common good or well-being of society. These distinctions inform at least three overarching goals for career intervention intended to promote a sense of calling. First, a goal for career intervention from a calling perspective is to explore the relationship between one's career development and matters of existential importance. The history of the construct is closely tied to religious and spiritual traditions, most directly in Judeo-Christian contexts, although it also resonates with other religious perspectives (e.g., Dalai Lama & Cutler, 2004; Hermansen, 2004). For clients who bring a religious or spiritual worldview into counseling, the concept of calling provides a mechanism for integrating faith and work in a way that promotes wholeness and coherence in life (Hardy, 1990; K. M. Hernandez & Mahoney, 2012). Similarly, for clients who are nonreligious but who are oriented to existential questions, discerning and living a calling offers a mechanism for linking one's global sense of meaning to the daily particulars of work life.

A second goal, obviously related to the first, recognizes that incorporating the notion of calling into career intervention means facilitating clients' pursuit of eudaimonic well-being, with hedonic well-being as an important but secondary concern. Well-being researchers have drawn from the work of "philosophers, religious masters, and visionaries, both from the East and the West" (Ryan & Deci, 2001, p. 45) in distinguishing eudaimonic well-being, which targets personal growth, psychological strengths, and a sense of purpose and meaning, from hedonic well-being, with its focus on pleasure and personal happiness. Hedonic outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction) have arguably been the typical target of intervention among career development practitioners and vocational psychology researchers. However, eudaimonic outcomes can be powerful. Meaningfulness, for example, buffers against depression and anxiety, positively

predicts a wide array of healthy psychological functioning indicators (Steger, Frazier, Oishi, & Kaler, 2006), and is itself a desirable end state that is of central existential importance (Emmons, 1999). This is not to say that personal happiness is somehow antithetical to a calling perspective. Indeed, happiness has been conceptualized as arising from meaningfulness (Lent, 2004). Nevertheless, a calling perspective places its primary focus on eudaimonic outcomes such as a sense of meaning, purpose, and contribution.

A third goal for career intervention from a calling perspective is to actively promote prosocial values in career choice and development. That is, counselors should encourage clients to engage questions of how their work activity might have a positive impact on the world around them. Some readers may wonder whether this stance is ethical, akin to imposing counselor values on clients. At one time, value neutrality was described as a goal in counseling, but research has shown the counseling process to be inherently value laden (e.g., Patterson, 1989). One implication of this point is that clearly articulating counselor values to clients is very important, including as a matter of informed consent. The ethical principle of beneficence (i.e., to do good and help others) requires that counselors and clients clarify what constitutes a good outcome (Tjeltveit, 2006), which in turn is tied to beliefs about the good life and good society, all topics that, ideally, should be explicitly addressed in the counseling context (Blustein, McWhirter, & Perry, 2005). Our assumption (supported in part by research evidence; see Dik, Duffy, & Steger, 2012) is that promoting the well-being of others is a universal good and that a good outcome from career intervention occurs when people are engaged in work they experience as meaningful and in which they can use their abilities for the direct or indirect advancement of social harmony and societal well-being.

In general, intervention strategies that build on these goals can be divided into those that target career choice concerns and those that target work adjustment concerns. We address these sets of concerns in turn, reframing them as discerning a calling and living a calling.

Discerning a Calling

Encourage active discernment. The earliest ideas about what it means to approach work as a calling emphasized the role of a transcendent summons, which typically assumes that a calling implies a caller, an external source of the summons. Many clients with religious and spiritual commitments assume that God, a higher power, the universe, and so forth has a plan for their lives that they should figure out and follow. Other clients may talk about their destiny or the career path that they were “meant” to pursue. With such clients, inviting discussion of these beliefs and framing the career choice process as one of discerning a calling often has, in our experience, a positive impact on both the working alliance and the client’s engagement in the process. However, a potential vulnerability we have observed in clients who view their career decision making through this lens is what we have called the “pray-and-wait” approach. This strategy consists of issuing a plea for a clear sense of direction and then passively waiting for its unveiling. Ironically, mainstream theological teaching suggests that except in unusual instances, God uses a mediated process to reveal a calling, one guided by, for example, an individual’s ability to self-reflect and use available resources and sources of support (Hardy, 1990; Schuurman, 2004). The concern with the pray-and-wait approach is not the prayer (which counselors should never discourage), but the waiting, to the extent that it is a passive waiting. Encouraging a pray-and-be-active alternative with such clients is essential.

Connect gifts with opportunities. A key pathway for actively engaging the career choice process is assisting clients in understanding how they are unique and helping them explore how their uniqueness may equip them to more easily thrive in some areas of work than in others. This is merely a restatement of person–environment fit theory. We typically draw from Holland’s (1997) theory and the theory of work adjustment (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984) to implement this strategy, but other theoretical approaches (e.g., Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2006) can be leveraged to pursue this goal as well. We find that describing interests,

values, personality, and abilities as gifts offers an accessible way for clients to conceptualize themselves as unique. Furthermore, the dimensions of each construct (e.g., RIASEC types, Big Five personality traits) serve as heuristics that are useful in the next step in the process, which is evaluating career paths (i.e., occupations, college majors) and specific job opportunities according to their relative fit with clients’ gifts. To assist in evaluating fit, counselors can use occupational databases such as the Occupational Information Network (O*NET; <http://www.onetonline.org>) to facilitate exploration, assist clients in arranging and preparing for informational interviews with workers in careers they find promising, or ideally both. Computer-assisted career guidance systems offer clients another approach to better understanding their uniqueness and exploring possible good-fitting career paths (Copeland et al., 2011).

Explore social fit. A unique addition to the process of assessing fit that supports the goal of promoting prosocial work values is the notion of “social fit,” a concept that traces to Plato (Muirhead, 2004). *Social fit* refers to the fit between an individual’s gifts (e.g., patterns of interests, values, personality, and abilities) and the requirements of a particular set of social needs. In a calling-infused approach to career intervention, exploring how clients may be differentially equipped to address a set of social needs (e.g., environmental stewardship, improving economic health, strengthening a sense of community) can offer a sense of contribution and purpose. A career path offering social fit does not require directly helping people (e.g., physician, social worker); in many instances, individuals may perceive social fit in terms of indirect contributions (e.g., manufacturing products that make life easier or more enjoyable for people, running a shipping and receiving department so that people are connected with the goods they need). This notion of social fit is reflected in Frederick Buechner’s (1973) oft-cited definition of calling as “the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet” (p. 95).

Align career goals with life goals. Although the dominant theories in vocational psychology have sometimes been criticized for building on the

assumption that work is the most important life role for people (e.g., Worthington, Flores, & Navarro, 2006), some (most notably Super's life span, life space theory; Hartung, 2012) have emphasized the importance of balancing work within the context of other salient life roles. The neoclassical understanding of calling syncs well with this emphasis and stresses the importance of pursuing one's work-related calling in a way that complements, rather than competes with, one's other obligations, aspirations, and callings in life (Dik & Duffy, 2012). One way counselors can facilitate this is to work with the client to articulate at least five current career goals, then five current life goals. We encourage clients to write these goals down on separate sheets of paper. After they do so, we hold these lists of goals side by side and ask the client, "To what extent are your career goals in alignment with your life goals? Are you happy with your answer to this question? If not, what needs to change?" In our experience, this simple exercise can be diagnostic: If career and life goals are closely aligned, the client is likely on her or his way to experiencing work as meaningful. If there is incongruence, the client likely already feels unhappy, or at least somewhat disjointed and segmented rather than integrated and whole. In either case, expressing and evaluating goals in writing is a useful starting point for exploring what clients value and how they see their work as fitting into their lives as a whole.

Strategies for Living a Calling

Phrases such as "I want to find my calling" are common among clients but imply that a calling is a thing to be discovered as in one intense moment of inspiration, after which a person lives happily ever after. The reality is that approaching work as a calling is ordinarily not the result of a one-time "aha" experience but rather an ongoing process of reflection, evaluation, and active engagement of one's work role in a way that seeks to maintain or enhance one's calling. Although this perhaps seems obvious in an increasingly fluid, dynamic world of work, the notion of living a calling as an ongoing process, or even a lifestyle, may differ from what some clients expect or desire. In such cases, some reality testing and psychoeducation may be useful so that client expectations are reasonable and in line with the constraints of reality.

Given the empirical evidence that living out one's calling appears to be the key ingredient in reaping the benefits of perceiving a calling, it is important for counselors to be equipped with strategies to help people live their callings or shape their current job to bring it in greater alignment with what they view as a calling. Such strategies are easier to carry out for clients who are already pursuing a career path that aligns well with what they view as their calling; put another way, the easiest route to living out a calling is to choose a career path to which one feels called. This seems obvious, and it is supported by decades of research on person-environment fit (e.g., Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005), but many people (a) may not have the ability to freely choose their jobs or (b) make job decisions on the basis of external factors such as money, prestige, or status, as opposed to personal or social fit. However, the strategies for active crafting of one's job in ways that support a calling are the same for those who occupy a good-fitting job and those who work in a position that, for whatever reason, may not be an ideal fit. Next, we describe two of these strategies—job crafting and pursuing callings outside of paid employment.

Job crafting. Job crafting represents the first strategy (or more accurately, set of strategies) for helping to make one's work more meaningful. Rooted in a series of mainly qualitative studies in the management literature, job crafting assumes that people are active shapers of their work experiences and can engage in intentional activities to elicit a greater sense of meaningfulness and purpose (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). These ideas are similar to how Dawis and Lofquist (1984) described work adjustment behavior—how workers can shape their work environments, themselves, or both to increase or maintain the degree of fit between the two. Similarly, Park (2012) described how people create meaning by translating their global beliefs, goals, and subjective sense of meaningfulness into daily meaning through their interpretations of events, the strivings and personal projects they pursue, and positive affect and satisfaction they may experience. A sense of calling serves as a mediator through which people actively engage in a process of connecting their

work experiences and goals to their global meaning frameworks, and job crafting offers specific strategies they can use to do so (Dik, Duffy, & Tix, 2012). Regardless of one's work environment, virtually all employees have the ability to craft their job to at least some degree. Scholars have identified three types of crafting—task, relational, and cognitive—each of which hold promise for helping clients live their callings.

Task crafting refers to altering the tasks, or the way tasks are completed, at work. This strategy is well suited to workers whose job tasks do not align well with their natural interests, skills, abilities, and values. For example, in a qualitative study with 33 employees, Berg, Wrzesniewski, and Dutton (2010) found that individuals tended to craft their tasks at work by either (a) altering the nature of their tasks or (b) adding new tasks. One participant discussed a passion for gathering information using the Internet, which was a part of his job, and noted that when he has the opportunity to explore the Internet and online tools more, he always takes it. Another participant discussed being in a charge of a registration table for an annual luncheon; although she did not have to do this, she chose to because she likes being in control and experiencing even a small sense of accomplishment. One way to help clients bring their jobs into closer alignment with their callings is to help them identify, as these two workers did, where they might change or add tasks to create more opportunities to highlight their strengths and satisfy their interests.

Relational crafting involves altering one's relationships in the workplace. Humans are naturally social and relational beings (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), and the more people are able to build relational bonds in the workplace, the happier they tend to be. One example from Berg, Wrzesniewski, and Dutton's (2010) study was an employee who went out of her way to build relationships with coworkers who did not work in her area of responsibility, with the hope that through these relationships she could develop new skills and knowledge that could help her do her job better. Another employee discussed a colleague who ran meetings inefficiently. To avoid suffering through needlessly long meetings, the employee began to schedule meetings at times that

immediately preceded a different meeting that some team members were required to attend, essentially forcing an earlier end time that required the colleague to use more efficient tactics. Whether it be by forming new relationships or changing others, assisting clients to identify ways to increase their positive relational experiences (and decrease negative ones) in the workplace may be another route to helping them construct a sense of meaningfulness in their work.

Cognitive crafting refers to mentally reframing the meaning and potential impact of one's work. Compared with task and relational crafting, cognitive crafting is more about reframing how a person views her or his work and its purpose and less about making changes to the work environment itself. This type of crafting may be especially useful for people who have tried other crafting techniques and still feel stuck. Berg, Wrzesniewski, and Dutton (2010) discussed a customer service representative who knows that on paper her job is about taking and entering orders, but who reframed its purpose as fundamentally about giving customers an enjoyable experience. In modern societies in which people are bound by mutual needs, almost all jobs by nature exist because they provide a service in some capacity, either directly or indirectly. Learning to mentally connect that service and the value it creates with the tasks one is completing will likely lead to experiencing one's job as more meaningful.

To summarize, whether clients are pursuing the career path to which they feel called or trying to make the best of a job that is not an ideal fit, we encourage counselors to help clients identify opportunities to task craft, relationally craft, or cognitively craft their jobs to increase the sense of fit, meaningfulness, and prosocial impact. A structured intervention that clients and counselors can complete together is the Job Crafting Exercise, developed by Berg, Dutton, and Wrzesniewski (2008). This exercise guides clients in a process of evaluating their current job in light of their ideal job and targeting ways to close the gap between the two. Of course, identifying opportunities to job craft is useful and important, but it does not guarantee clients will actually engage in crafting behavior between counseling sessions. To encourage following through, we

urge clients to make at least one attempt to craft each day for a week, recording in a daily diary how each attempt went and the difference it made. Clients can then bring this diary with them to subsequent counseling sessions, providing rich fodder for evaluating the process.

Callings outside of paid work. There are scenarios in which workers have very little latitude to actively shape their jobs or in which no amount of job crafting can transform a job into anything resembling a calling. For example, imagine a client who perceives a calling to use music to bring joy to people, but who is currently working on an assembly line. Drawing a connection between one's calling and one's job may in this case be extremely difficult. Individuals facing circumstances such as this may be best advised to focus on living a calling outside of their job. Several studies have investigated individuals who live out a calling avocationally (to use an ironic term), usually via a leisure pursuit or in parenthood (e.g., Berg, Grant, & Johnson, 2010; Sellers, Thomas, Batts, & Ostman, 2005). In their book *Make Your Job a Calling*, Dik and Duffy (2012) highlighted several strategies to reap the benefits of a calling outside of paid employment.

First, individuals are encouraged to differentiate core and peripheral callings. It is possible that for some people, playing music is a central part of their identity and purpose, whereas for others it is merely an amusing pastime. The core calling is the one that, if pursued, will lead to the strongest sense that one is using her or his gifts meaningfully, in a way that has a positive impact on others or contributes to the greater good. Second, for these types of callings, it is important to devote, and protect, time to invest in living out that calling. The normal structure of paid employment provides a natural window of time each day for an individual to devote to her or his calling, but this is not the case for many nonwork callings. As such, it is important that people proactively set aside and guard specific periods of time in which they can engage in their callings outside of work and protect these times as they would paid employment.

Finally, Dik and Duffy (2012) pointed out the importance of treating this outside-of-work calling like any other calling—as a meaningful pursuit that

enhances the greater good. Although living out this type of calling is not tied to financial gain, it is critical that it still be tied to one's sense of self and used to help others in some capacity. The part-time musician may go to lessons every week and practice every day but can also identify ways to tie music to her or his original goal of bringing joy to others, whether that be by mentoring younger musicians, performing for those who would benefit, or leading a family sing-along. By following these suggestions, we believe that individuals who live out a calling outside of work can reap benefits similar to those who live it out in paid employment.

THE CASE OF KERI

Keri, a 37-year-old multiracial woman, came to career counseling after what she described as “a long time in career purgatory.” When asked to explain this, she said that the last 5 years in her current job could best be characterized as “biding my time, trying to do well, hoping that better things are ahead, but wondering how long things will be like this.” Keri indicated that she worked as an administrator for the retirement services office of her state government, a job she had held for 8 years and her first after earning her MBA. Although she rose quickly up the ranks within the bureaucracy, each step further removed Keri from the people her office served. When asked to tell the story of her career to date, Keri noted that after she first took this job she traveled throughout the state with a small team that delivered training on how to implement the retirement plans for state employees. After several promotions, she now manages approximately 50 employees engaged in a wide range of responsibilities related to retirement services.

Early in the counseling process, Keri identified that although she felt that her job was an excellent fit with her abilities, interests, and personality, it no longer sat well with her values. When asked to clarify, she indicated that she took the job right around the time her parents decided to put a timetable on their retirement. In all the conversations Keri had with her parents, she saw the importance that an effective plan and a streamlined process for implementing that plan could have for people who were

of retirement age. A motivating factor for her in taking the job was knowing that her work would help people like her parents retire. “I felt it was a calling,” Keri confirms. “And early on, when I was doing all those trainings, it was great because I was working on the front lines with people who were really benefiting from this stuff.” She noted that it felt like a long time since she had seen the impact of the office’s work personally. “I feel so removed from it now; it just seems like it’s all about turning in paperwork on time, evaluating my employees, and making sure we’re coming in under budget every quarter. I know in my head that these things are important, but they hardly stir my spirit.”

In working with Keri, it quickly became clear that, for her, there was a disconnect between the work that she did every day and the broader purpose it served. One of the core strategies of counseling from a calling perspective is forging connections between one’s day-to-day tasks with a broader, overarching purpose. To encourage this, Keri was guided through a simple exercise in which she was asked to articulate the broader purpose of her work by describing its beneficiaries and imagining both (a) the challenges they could face if her work was not done well and (b) the opportunities the beneficiaries experienced that were enabled by her team’s efforts. She was also asked to identify and explore the typical day-to-day evaluative thoughts and emotions she had been having about her work. Next, she was encouraged to reflect on the chasm between her daily experience of her job and the nature of the impact that her efforts have on those who benefit from it, even if only indirectly, through the efforts of the employees she manages. When Keri was encouraged to brainstorm specific ways she could bridge this gap, she identified the following strategies:

- At least twice a year, go on one of the training meetings with her training staff.
- Plan and host a quarterly reception for a dozen or so newly retired state employees who have accessed the services provided by her office, and publish retirement stories in the office newsletter.
- Begin staff meetings with an invitation for workers to share stories of people who are in the

process of retiring using one of the plans the office has helped design.

- In their performance reviews, encourage employees to articulate how their efforts are important in helping people to retire smoothly and well, and model this by doing it herself.

Keri described these activities as easy-to-implement ways to recapture some of what she experienced early on in the job, when she had more direct contact with the beneficiaries of her work. They reflect all three types of crafting. First, she proposed adding tasks that she enjoyed to her regular work flow (task crafting). Second, these activities were intended to create opportunities to strengthen her relationships with staff and to establish new relationships with those who benefited from their work (relational crafting). Finally, these strategies also seemed likely to help inspire and remind herself and her employees why they are all in business: not just to manage budgets, deliver trainings, produce financial reports, or attend meetings, but to help people retire well (cognitive crafting).

Keri was encouraged to try out some of these strategies and to evaluate in her journal how she felt about their effectiveness. When she did so, she voiced surprise over how these forms of crafting not only influenced her own sense of her work as meaningful but also changed the attitudes of many of her employees, several of whom shared with her how powerful it was to stay grounded in what their work was all about. Given that the ideas for these strategies came from Keri herself, the process of implementing them helped build a sense of self-efficacy for engaging in effective job crafting, a skill that should prove useful as her roles and demands continue to change in the years ahead.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

As research on calling continues to proliferate and theory begins to develop to help organize and draw inferences from the accumulating results, the practical applications of calling will evolve. Evidence thus far has pointed to a sense of calling as associated with positive career-related and general well-being, especially for those who are able to live out their

callings. In response, we have mapped out several strategies in this chapter for helping clients discern a sense of calling and also for helping clients implement their callings by taking active steps to live it out. Although these recommendations may be useful starting points, we encourage career development practitioners to creatively explore how their own approaches to career counseling can be enhanced by assisting clients in discerning and living out a calling, with the goals of helping clients connect their work with their broader sense of purpose in life in a way that fosters meaningfulness and provides a sense of contribution to the greater good.

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