The Power of Informal Interviews (aka, “informational interviews”)

When most people hear the word interview usually cringing and slight nausea follow. Enter the informal interview, where the pressure of your future is not on the line. These interviews are more like conversations, and can come in handy for learning, relationship-building, decision-making, and goal setting.

In addition to the practical benefits, informal interviews provide a great way to strengthen your relationships (old and new), and learn interesting things about other people. Your interviewees will enjoy sharing their wisdom, and you will learn new things in the process.

Experiment with informal interviews by setting up lunches, 30-minute phone calls, coffee, or any other format that works for you. For each category, come up with at least 3 people you could meet with.

New job or job role:

One of the best ways to get up to speed in a new job is to talk to other people who are already doing it and ask them for advice; for example, what they have learned in the role and what they wished they knew when they started.

Potential people to meet with:

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

Big goals:

Once you have set a big goal, like learning a second language or becoming a manager at work, talk to people who have done it before you. This type of informal interview has two side benefits: a growing support network, and increased accountability as you share your goal with more people.

Potential people to meet with:

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________
Future Career Options:

Meet with someone in a completely different career path and/or company than the one you are currently in. As you meet people through friends, at conferences or at coffee shops, ask about their job. If any jump out at you as particularly interesting, schedule some time to learn more about what they do and how that person got there.

Potential people to meet with:

People you admire:

Make a list of people you admire. Spend more time with these people! Tell them you admire them. Ask them to be your mentors. These are some of your most important relationships because they can help remind you of what you aspire to and how to aspire to be, keeping in mind that you are unique and wonderful in your own right.

Potential people to meet with:

Help with decision-making:

Sometimes your friends and family, as great as they are, do not have enough information to help you through a big decision, like whether or not to go to graduate school. Interview people with a variety of experiences to gather information (for example, those who did and did not go). You are not asking for advice here – you are asking about what decisions and trade-offs your interviewees made and how satisfied they are with their choices.

Potential people to meet with:

Last but not least, don’t forget to send thank-you notes!

While emails are convenient, handwritten notes are a much nicer touch and leave a lasting impression.