Life Role Analysis
A Client’s Personal Journey to Vocational Change

By Mary Hansen, RRP, CCRC, Director/Senior Consultant of Moving Towards Wellness Ltd.; in collaboration with Susan Hrovat, BA, MSW, RSW, RRP and Gail Fraser, CDP

As a Case Manager for over 15 years, I’ve had the wonderful opportunity of working with many youths and adults that have had to overcome great adversity as it relates to the unfortunate happenstance, of being involved in a multi or single vehicle collision, from which they sustained significant injuries. The role of the Case Manager is to aid the injured individual in weaving the long and windy road of the extensive rehabilitation process and assisting in facilitating recovery. At the same time, I’ve had the opportunity of working with several fantastic and experienced Health Care Providers in the therapeutic process that assist our clients to reaching maximum recovery.

As there is a progression through the rehabilitation process, oftentimes many clients have to address, at some point, the Return to Work possibilities which also involve the full Rehabilitation Team. The requirement would be to address the client’s employment options and abilities after maximal recovery in the medical rehabilitation process. Will this individual be able to return to the same employment with the same employer? Is there modified duties and gradual return to work offered with the same employer? Is there the opportunity to experience a different work role with the same employer? And, finally, does the client need to address a totally different vocational direction?

If a client is faced with looking at a totally different vocational direction, many tools are used to assess, quantify, qualify and determine what the best and most optimal vocational direction is. However, with most of these tools the process analysis’ and objective testing, the personal and “soft side” of life changing vocational re direction is lost. Hence, the Life Role Analysis is an effective tool to assist the client in looking at their personal journey involving their prior experiences and how they have maximized in recovery to a point where the individual can address and develop new goals and objectives for vocational pursuits.

Again, as a Case Manager, I’ve had a great opportunity to work with two of my colleagues through Moving Towards Wellness Ltd. that are experienced Life Role Analysis Consultants; Ms. Susan Hrovat and Ms. Gail Fraser. These individuals have connected with several clients and have offered very beneficial assistance as part of the Vocational Rehabilitation team. Both Gail and Susan are Certified Life Role Analysis Consultants and, as well, have extensive Vocational and Career Development experience.

The Life Role Analysis is a counselling process that was largely adapted by Dr. Keith Magnussen of the University of Saskatchewan and Dr. David Redekopp for The Centre of Career Development Innovation in Alberta. It is a comprehensive view of Career Development that integrates elements of classic trait and factor techniques with person-centered cognitive behavioural and system theory approaches. In this view, 5 processes seem to be critical in the career counselling practice, which include initiation, exploration, decision-making, preparation and implementation. (Magnusseen1992) This process has been used nationally with the Canadian “Stay in School Initiative” and generally with any type of client who has experienced a change that prevents them from returning to their previous type of employment.

As a Case Manager, I also have had front line experience with feedback from the initial stages of introducing Vocational Rehabilitation prior to the Vocational Team being put in place. Oftentimes, when a client is faced with challenge of determining “Can you return to work and, if so, what would you like to do now?” Most clients have many ideas but feel overwhelmed by the process. They are unsure about how to manage their families, unsure about what their skills are, the level of ability to be re-educated or re-trained, and where there is work available in the things that they are interested in through their local communities? The client faces many challenges and oftentimes the thought process is so daunting it is very difficult for them to proceed through the Vocational Process with an open mind.

As noted earlier, the traditional Career Assessment process has been very heavily reliant on the use of formal “testing and assessment procedures”. While these assessments have their purpose and provide very important information, they also have the effect of depersonalizing the experience for clients. They are standardized and do not always account for personalized life situations. The Life Role Analysis requires personal involvement from the client. It involves their direct contribution and it increases their participation as well as their self-awareness in vocational and a-vocational opportunities. A Life Role Analysis increases their level of responsibility for a positive well thought out vocational outcome. In essence, the client takes ownership of the outcome where they have fully participated and engaged in the Life Role Analysis process.
Aspects of the Life Role Analysis involve a Career Self Portrait which is a simple method that assists the clients to examine themselves from four aspects. The first aspect is Meaning - What are their values, beliefs, interests and barriers to any of their goals and meaningful relationships or interactions? Outcomes – A component of a dream or future vision. What could happen if I do this? How would I choose my goals? Activities – Includes what he/she have preferred to do given the choice for leisure, work, family, etc. and also examining their past and what they need or what has not been fulfilled in their life from an activity level. Finally, Tools and Techniques include the vision of potential transferable skills such as general skills, knowledge, personal characteristics and attitudes. (Redekoopp 1994)

Therefore, the method of comprising a Life Role Analysis and creating a Career Self Portrait significantly involves the client. Sitting side by side and assigning portions of homework of self-examination and review so the Career Self Portrait or Life Role Analysis becomes “a living document”. It also encourages dreaming. “In the best of all worlds, what do you want to get out of life? Where do you vision yourself? What do you think the future will hold for you from a personal, vocational and physical/cognitive level?”

Career Planning is really about managing change. Change management implies planning, and that is a focal point of the Life Role Analysis, with the outcome being developed and implemented in an action plan. (This process has six outcomes that include; dream/vision (hope), a specific goal (target), a list of alternatives for reaching that goal (supports and resources), and a specific plan for goal attainment (Means), an acceptable career fit (Satisfaction, Resolution and Accommodation), and self sufficiency in career process (Adaptability and Independence). (Redekoopp, Day, Magnusson & Durnford 1993)

In the end; the Life Role Analysis is led by the participant and facilitated by a Certified Life Role Analysis Consultant. The process assists the participant to identifying their current situation, environment, strength, abilities, barriers, needs, skills/knowledge (self-management), technical (transferable), values (interests, beliefs), support networks, goals (education, employment, personal) and action plan. Each goal has an action plan and, as well, the Life Role Analysis, along with the individual, set timeframes around pursuing these areas. (Redekoopp 1994)

Once a Life Role Analysis has been completed is an excellent tool of match with traditional vocational assessment and, as well, the Life Role Consultant can also liaise with the Vocational Specialist

Therefore, the primary goal of a Life Role Analysis is to assist the client in continually manage decisions regarding the next steps required to move toward, rather than move away from, his/her vision of vocational choice. Therefore, the process and approach to Career Planning becomes a personal one for each individual. The client increases his participation and therefore it tends to result in increased level of responsibility and ownership of their outcomes. (Magnusson1990) In essence, the client takes ownership of the outcome where they are fully participating and engaged in the process. It allows the client to have exploration from within the context of the client’s situation in a developed creative process. It is more flexible and allows for vast design considerations to assist the client in developing the necessary career planning skills first, fostering growth and development and helps the individuals become more adaptable to possible vocational choices they may not have considered previously.

The other successful component to a Life Role Analysis is that it helps identify support systems and resources that can be accessed along the career planning process that are integral and critical for success in the long term goal.

As a Case Manager, I have found this to be a very successful union of a traditional vocational testing, along with the self-exploration and discovery for individuals as it relates to vocational change. Feedback that I have received from clients that have participated in this process has been very successful. I’ve included a few comments from some of my clients that have participated in a Life Role Analysis however names have been omitted for privacy.

“I felt I had no where to go. I had to look at totally changing careers; I had to rethink what my goals were prior to my injuries to try to determine what I wanted to do with the rest of my life now. I found the Life Role Analysis an excellent examination of self and I was able to take all my thoughts running through my head and narrow them down to something that was concrete and I was able to work with. I did not feel as overwhelmed after completing this task as I did before.”
“Wow, what can I say. Sue Hrovat was excellent. She was so helpful and I loved the process and talking with her in regards to changing my vocational life goals. I found it interesting. I found it really helped me examine myself and what I wanted to do in the future; what I would love to do. It also allowed me to participate with my spouse after formal sessions with Sue and discuss these goals as obviously a vocational change would involve my wife and children as well.”

Gail Fraser and Sue Hrovat both report they love participating in the Life Role Analysis planning process, as they can see the metamorphosis of a client who feels overwhelmed by even trying to think of vocational change. But as they guide someone through the personal journey of self-examination with the vocational aspects in mind, they find it is a hugely successful tool that allows for the client to have a better focus on their future and also the outcomes have been successful.

If you have any questions in regards to the Life Role Analysis please do not hesitate to contact Moving Towards Wellness Ltd. and speak with either, Mary Hansen, Susan Hrovat or Gail Fraser.