

# **Exploring Careers**

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**Career Advancement Toolkit:  
Career Decision 101  
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# Agenda

- You have many skills and options
- How to explore these and make contacts in fields of interest
- Informational Interviewing
  - (demonstration and practice)
- Next steps - Questions
- Follow-up resources

# Categories of Job-Relevant Skills

- Technical Skills
- Functional or Transferable Skills
- Personal Characteristics
- Job-Specific Skills

# Skills Scientists Possess

- Knowledge of science & technology
- Strong work ethic
- Competitive spirit
- Inquisitive nature
- Methodical
- Ability to attend to detail
- Patience, perseverance
- Mathematical aptitude

# Other Skills Scientists Have

- Good record-keeping skills
- Computer skills
- Public speaking skills
- Written communication skills
- Analytical thinking abilities
- Problem solving skills
- Creativity
- Willingness to take risks

# Non-traditional Careers for Biological Scientists



- Biotech. Industry
- Science writing & communications
- Science-Based Investment Advising
- Science Policy



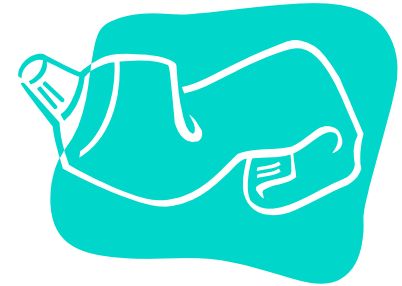
# More Non-traditional Careers



- Venture Capital
- Business Development
- Forensics
- K-12 Science Education



# Some Additional Options



- Business Information Services
- Adult Education
- Product Development
- Medical & Scientific Illustration



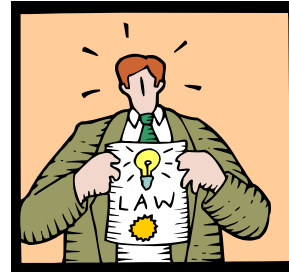


# And Still Other Options

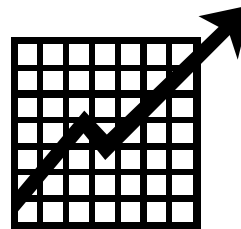
- Regulatory Affairs



- Patent Law

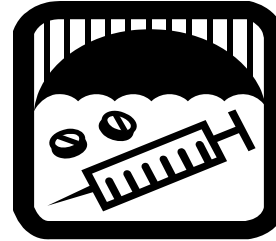


- Technical Sales



# Or Consider These Choices

- Health Care Planning



- Executive Search

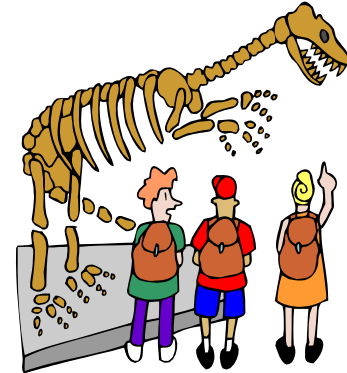


- Consulting



# Or These

- Informal Science Education
- Grants Administration
- Scientific Association Management



# How Do You Make Your Choices?

- Consider who you are. What are your:
  - Interests
  - Skills/abilities/aptitudes
  - Personal Values
  - Personality characteristics
  - Unique circumstances/personal & family issues
  
- Where's the need? How can I fill it?

# Learning about Your Options

- Informational Interviewing. Ask
  - What's a typical day like?
  - How much science are you doing?
  - How much autonomy do you have?
- Arrange to shadow someone in the job.
- Volunteer in the field, if possible.
- Take a short-term or contractual position.

# Ways to Identify People for Informational Interviews

- Internet
  - Search engines
  - Social networking sites: LinkedIn, etc.
- Career panels
- Job fairs
- Professional associations
- Networking
- Alumni networks

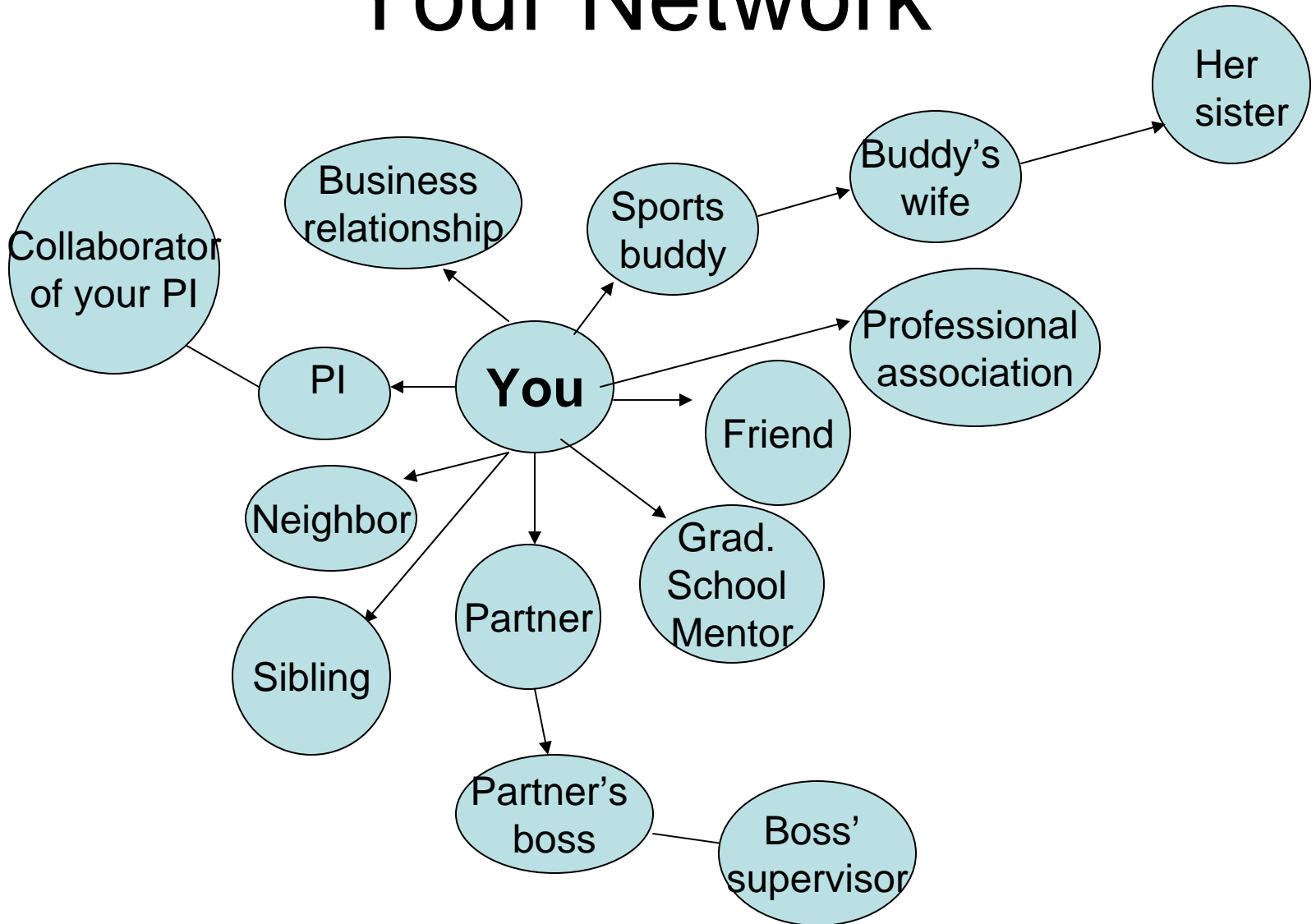
# NIH Library

- **General Reference 301-496-1080**
- <http://nihlibrary.nih.gov/LibraryServices/AskALibrarian.htm>

- **Search Request Form**
- (Use this form to ask for information that isn't publicly available about companies. Librarians have access to business databases.)
- <http://nihlibrary.nih.gov/LibraryServices/RequestLiteratureSearch.htm>



# Your Network



# WHAT IS AN INFORMATION INTERVIEW?

- A brief meeting or discussion with someone whose job or career field you are interested in learning about.

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# You ask questions about:

- work tasks,
- work environment
- what the organization looks for in job candidates
- the person's background and education and how he or she obtained the job

# WHY NOT JUST READ OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION?

- Written information is general
- Whereas, each person's job is unique.
- No written material is completely up-to-date.
- You can get answers to specific questions, see the work place
- Make contacts

# BEST TYPE OF PERSON TO INTERVIEW?

- Someone who is actually doing or has recently done the type of job you want to know about
- Someone close to the level you would expect to start at, so you get an accurate, detailed impression of what to expect in the first few years.

# HOW DO I LOCATE A PERSON TO INTERVIEW?

- **Contact method**
- Can be easier but can be more time consuming
- Ask, “Do you know a \_\_\_\_\_ I could talk to about his or her job?”
- Do you know anyone who works at (specific place)?

# Direct method

- Direct method involves e-mailing, calling, or visiting an organization to find someone whose job is of interest to you.

# HOW DO I SET UP THE INTERVIEW?

- Briefly introduce yourself—name, that you are a fellow at NIH, that you are considering \_\_\_\_\_ as a career and would appreciate a 30- to 45-minute appointment to ask some questions about what the work involves.
- Stress that this is not a job interview but a request for occupational information



# DO I TAKE A RESUME?

- You do not want to communicate that your purpose is merely to obtain a job interview.
- It is useful to have a resume with you
- If requested, you may share it or send one after the interview.

# CONDUCT A SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEW

- Prepare Write out questions.
- Remember, you are the interviewer.
- Ask focused questions such as, “What are your most routine activities?”
- Take notes.
- Be yourself—conversational and amiable—to make this enjoyable.

# SOME SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

- What do you do during a typical workday?
- What do you like most/find most interesting about your work?
- How much flexibility do you have in terms of work hours, dress, etc.?
- What kinds of problems do you face? find most difficult?
- What attributes and background are needed in people applying for this type of work?
- How did you get started in this field?

# WAYS TO OVERCOME ANXIETY

- Since you have probably never done this sort of thing before, you may feel somewhat anxious.
- Most people usually enjoy the chance to talk about their work.
- Start with “low threat” people such as family, friends, or colleagues.
- Consider interviewing someone who you don’t know in an area of interest where there is less to lose, such as a hobby
- Be prepared! By reading a about the career area ahead of time and knowing yourself—your interests, abilities, and work values—you can formulate meaningful questions and tell a little about yourself if the other person asks.

# BENEFITS OF INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

- Helps you decide what type of work and setting you prefer.
- Helps increase your confidence for actual job interviews.
- Helps you to tailor your resume to your career objective, you have a better understanding of the job you are applying for.

# DON'T GENERALIZE!

- Remember - work environments and jobs differ tremendously from one place to another;
- Don't judge an entire field based on only one person's opinion.
- After the interview, take some time to reflect upon what you have learned—both your positive and negative impressions, the requirements of the job,
- What do you still want to know?

# Career Services OITE Provides

- Career Exploration Discussions
- Strong Interest Inventories
- M.B.T.I. Interpretations
- Interpersonal Skills Consultation
- Career Library
- Resume & C.V. reviews

# Career Services OITE Provides

- Job Search Assistance
- Mock Interviews
- Informational Interviewing Coaching
- Networking Coaching
- Virtual Career Center Web Site
- Job Postings



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E-mail Kathryn Foisie at [foisiek@mail.nih.gov](mailto:foisiek@mail.nih.gov)  
Or call Kathryn Foisie at 301-594-9339

# Resource Book

- Power Networking: 59 Secrets for Personal & Professional Success by Donna Fisher and Sandy Vilas
- Available in OITE Career Library

# Special Thank You

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Program Specialist

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Marion Zatz

Chief of the Developmental and Cellular Processes Branch

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