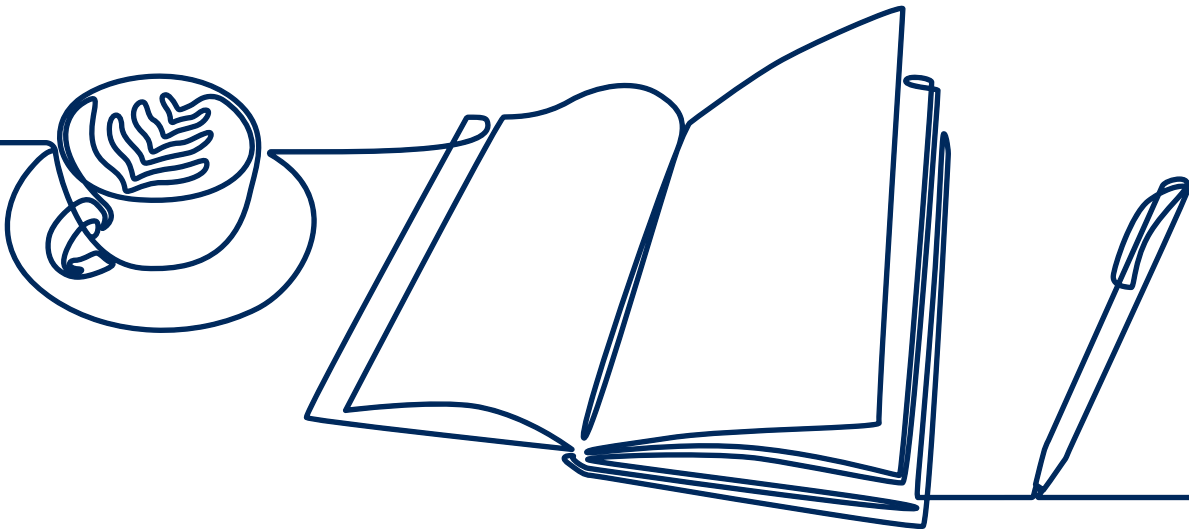


Expressive Career Writing Journal



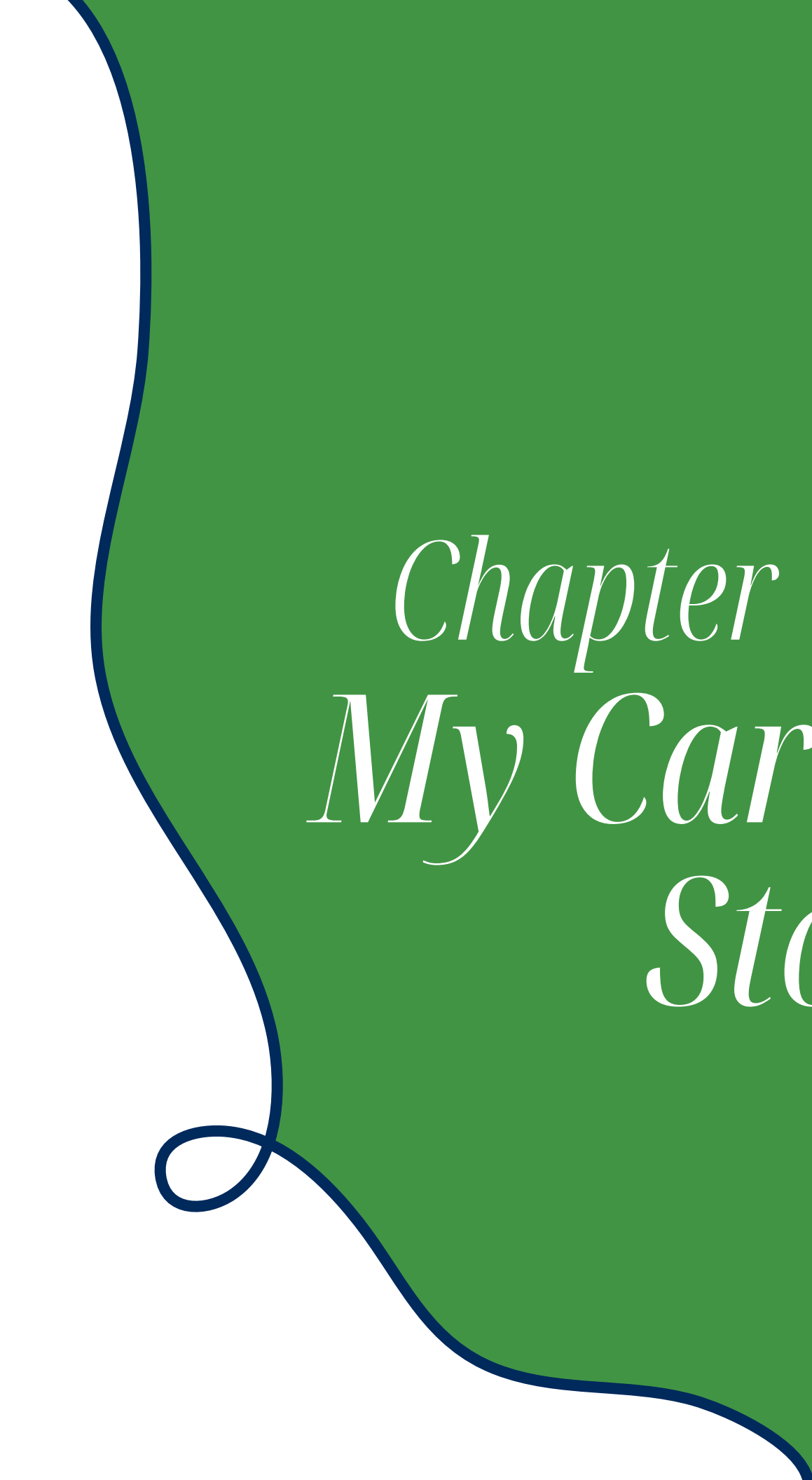
UNIVERSITY OF
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Career Exploration
& Education

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Chapter One: My Career Story

Early years

What did you want to be when you were young?

Who gave you your first ideas or advice about careers?

What early influences shaped your sense of possibility?



*“Imagination is everything.
It is the preview of life’s
coming attractions.”*
ALBERT EINSTEIN

Youth

What subjects & extra-curricular activities did you enjoy in high school?

What work/volunteer experiences did you have during this time?

What personal qualities did you demonstrate?

*“Youth is the time to go
flashing from one end of
the world to the other.”*
VIRGINIA WOOLF

Adult



What is your program of study? What led you to pursue your degree?
What work/volunteer experiences did you have during this time?
Who/what are your career influences at this time?

*"It's never too late to
be what you might
have been."*
GEORGE ELIOT



Future

What is next for you in your career?
What are you wondering about? What are you passionate about?
What is one career question you are thinking about right now?



*“The future belongs to those
who believe in the beauty
of their dreams.”*
ELEANOR
ROOSEVELT



Chapter Two: Stories of career journey



Write about a time you surprised yourself or a time you feel proud of and reflect on what skills or strengths you feel confident in from that experience.

What have you learned about yourself in the past year?

“Trust the wait. Embrace the uncertainty.
Enjoy the beauty of becoming.”

MANDY HALE

Your Career Journey Road Map



Your career journey isn't just about jobs or titles — it's made up of moments that shaped how you see yourself and the path ahead. In this activity, you'll draw a timeline that maps out the meaningful parts of your journey so far. Feel free to include any of the following along your timeline:

Turning points — moments that shifted your direction or perspective

Highlights — accomplishments or proud moments

Big feelings — joy, doubt, confusion, clarity, excitement, or fear

Question marks — times of uncertainty, challenges, or crossroads

Supporters — people who gave you energy, motivation, or courage



Chapter Three: Who am I right now?



Draw or list things that make you feel grounded (books, candles, jazz music, etc). What are your interests? What do you like to do? What kinds of activities do you find interesting?



A large empty rectangular box for drawing or listing interests.

What are some values, commitments, and workplace preferences that matter to you? When did you feel most connected? colour the ones that are important for you! If you don't find one among these, make one for yourself!

diversity

inclusiveness

work-life
balance

respect

interaction
with people

creativity

passion & interest

sense of
achievement

continuous
learning

integrity

collaborative

supportive
colleagues

impact-driven
work

safe

sense of
belonging

Mapping your experiences and skills

- Place your name in the middle of the paper and create a circle around it
- Create arrows extending out from the circle, one for each experience in your life, make these branches more general categories (academics, part-time work, etc.)
- Each of the broad categories, break it down further to specific experiences
- From each experience, consider the skills you have developed







Chapter Four: Facing fears, barriers and obstacles

Meet your inner critic

- If the critical voice in your head had a character, what would it look like?
- Draw your inner critic as a creature, cartoon, cloud, shadow or character
- Give it a name (e.g. Mr. Imposter, Ms. whisper of worry)
- Add speech bubbles with phrases it says often



I am scared, but here's what I can do

In the two-column chart, on the left column, list the fear you've had in your career journey and on the right column, jot down strategies for what you can do

Fear	What I know or can do
<i>"Everyone else has it figured out"</i>	<i>Most people are figuring things out as they go. Everyone's timeline looks different, and that's okay. I will focus on exploring my next step instead of comparing my path to others</i>
<i>"I don't have enough experience to get a job"</i>	<i>I can highlight the transferable skills I've gained from academic, volunteering or part-time work</i>
<i>"I don't think I will get a job without pursuing Further Education"</i>	<i>I can talk to Career Educator; can also talk to alumni in my field to learn about their paths</i>

**"Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying,
'I will try again tomorrow.'"**

*Chapter Five:
Dream boldly –
what does
my dream job
look like?*

Describe your dream job

Craft motives are when individuals match their professions with their talents and interests. Consider what interests you will find rewarding to work on every day.

Compensation motives include pay, but also power, authority, leadership and recognition. What will each of these items look like for you when you are working in your dream job?

Moral motives include trust, caring and vocation. Recognize workplace values that impact these factors, and foster these characteristics with your coworkers to build an environment for meaningful work.

Describe your dream job

List everything you want in life - including material things and money. What kinds of relationships do you want at work and home?

- What experiences will make you happy?
- How much time will you need for family and friends?
- Does your work need to be creative to be meaningful to you?
- Where do you see yourself in years, what does a workday look like, and how will you feel at the end of it?
- How do your values show up in your work?

After reflecting on these questions, describe your dream job.



*“Go confidently in the direction of your dreams.
Live the life you have imagined.”*

HENRY DAVID THOREAU

Imagine three different careers

In the table, 1) list three professional fields that excite you, 2) list three work-related activities that you love but not necessarily related to your field, and 3) list three areas where you might love to live (cities, urbans, sub-urbans, etc.)

Professional fields that excites me (land-based education, economics, etc.)	Work-related activities I love (creative work, group presentation, etc.)	Places that I'd love to live (Toronto, New York, LA, etc.)

Now mix and match your fields + activities + places to create 3-5 combinations.

example: organic farming and creative problem-solving in Toronto, Ontario



Chapter Six: Goal setting & action plan

Now that you've taken time to reflect on your career story, skills, and values, let's look ahead to what's next. You've explored where you've been, what matters to you, and the strengths that shape your journey. This chapter helps you bring those reflections together into intentional action steps.

As a quick recap:

Revisit your values from page 13, what are your top 3-5 values that matter most in your work and life?

Look back at skills you identified from page 14-15, what are your top 3-5 skills you most confident in?

Reflect on dream jobs or career ideas you imagined from page 22, what are your 3-5 combinations?

Now ask yourself:

- What gaps or areas do I want to explore or strengthen?
- What's one small action I could take in the next week, month, or semester?

Listing 3-5 actions you could try out next:

Here are a few examples to get started

- Reach out to a professional or alum for an informational chat
- Attend a career or networking event on campus
- Update or create a new section in your resume or portfolio
- Volunteer or take on a short-term project in your area of interest
- Explore a skill-building course or online module

“Start where you are. Use what you have.
Do what you can.”

ARTHUR ASHE

Goal Setting

Goal 1

(Start Date):

(End Date):

Action

Strategies

(what strategies/resources will you use to reach your goals)

Tasks

(what will you do to complete the actions)

Goal 2

(Start Date):

(End Date):

Action

Strategies

(what strategies/resources will you use to reach your goals)

Tasks

(what will you do to complete the actions)

Goal Setting

Goal 3

(Start Date):

(End Date):

Action

Strategies

(what strategies/resources will you use to reach your goals)

Tasks

(what will you do to complete the actions)

Goal 4

(Start Date):

(End Date):

Action

Strategies

(what strategies/resources will you use to reach your goals)

Tasks

(what will you do to complete the actions)

Chapter Seven: Support system & career wellness





Who do you turn to when you feel stuck, overwhelmed or unsure?
Who has supported you in your career journey? Name a few!

Where else can you find support - in your campus, community or online - if you don't have specific names yet?

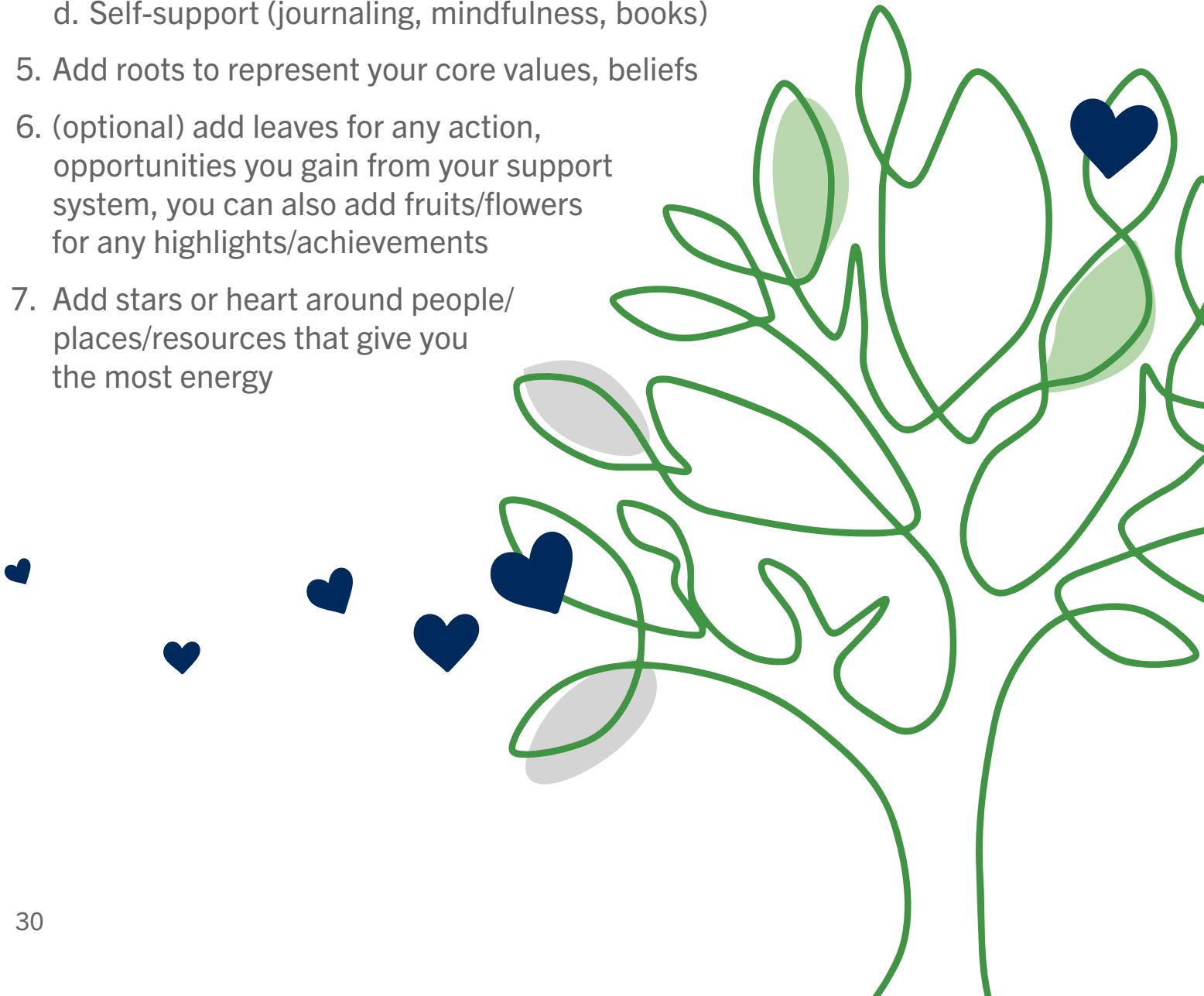
What kinds of wellness activities do you like to engage in?
(e.g. meditation, yoga, exploring nature, etc.)

How do you define a supportive community? What does it look and feel like for you? What kinds of support do you need most right now?

Career Support Tree

When we think about building career, we often focus on skills and goals but just like a tree needs sunlight, water, deep roots to grow, we need support to thrive! This activity helps you map out your career support ecosystem.

1. Draw yourself as the tree trunk in the center - your identity, strengths and lived experiences. Everything grows from here!
2. Add branches for the support around you:
 - a. Personal (family, friends, mentors)
 - b. Professional (coworkers, supervisors, career center)
 - c. Community (clubs, student groups)
 - d. Self-support (journaling, mindfulness, books)
5. Add roots to represent your core values, beliefs
6. (optional) add leaves for any action, opportunities you gain from your support system, you can also add fruits/flowers for any highlights/achievements
7. Add stars or heart around people/ places/resources that give you the most energy



Draw Your Own Career Support Tree!



“Surround yourself with
only people who are going
to lift you higher.”
OPRAH WINFREY



Chapter Eight: Closing the journal



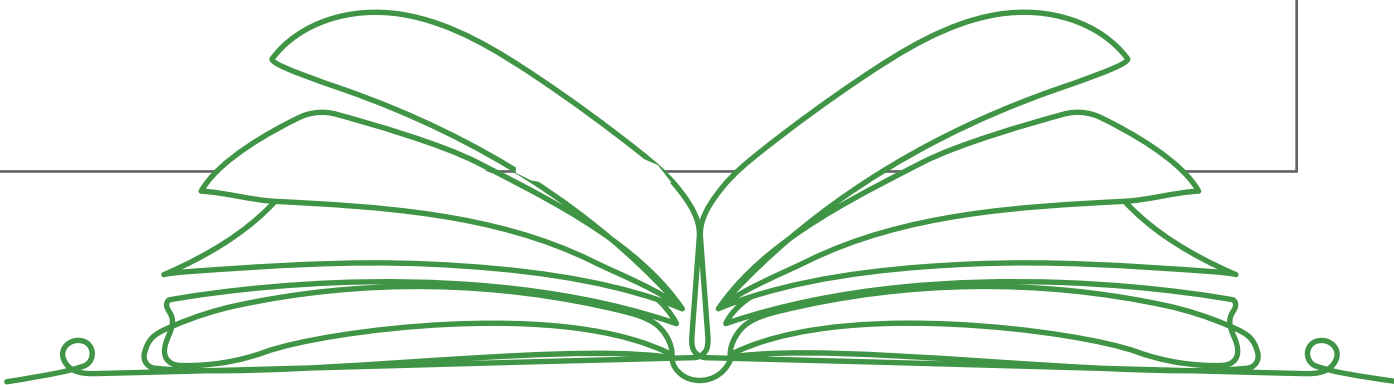
If I wrote myself a note for when I feel lost, it would say:



A Letter from My Retired Self

Imagine yourself at the end of your career, maybe you are celebrating your retirement, reflecting on all the work you've done, all the people you've helped, all the lessons you've lived through.

Write a letter from that future version of you to your current self, what would they say to yourself? What would they reassure you about? What would they remind you matters most?



References

Describe your Dream Job

careerstart.studentlife.utoronto.ca/describe-your-dream-job

Imagine Three Different Careers

careerstart.studentlife.utoronto.ca/activity-imagine-three-vastly-different-careers

**For further information, visit our website
for a full list of our services and resources:**

studentlife.utoronto.ca/departments/career-exploration-education

You can also reach out to us via
careerservices@utoronto.ca



The End



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