



The Life Career Rainbow

We all play various roles throughout the course of our lives. This is especially true in our working lives. Sometimes we are students, sometimes we are workers, sometimes we are parents, and sometimes we are spouses. All of these various roles bring with them a different type of work. Planning for these different types of work can be difficult. That is where Donald Super's Life Career Rainbow comes in.

What is the Life Career Rainbow?

The Life Career Rainbow was developed by Donald Super. According to Super, self-concept changes over time, and develops as a result of experience. As such, career development is lifelong.¹ The rainbow represents the different stages we go through in our life, the roles we play, and how that intersects our career.

Life and Career Development Stages

Super believed that people passed through various life stages that affect their career decision making. He identified the following life and career stages: Growth, Exploration, Establishment, Maintenance, and Decline.

Growth – The growth period begins at birth and continues until a person reaches the age of 14. During this period, a person begins to develop a concept of what they are, their attitudes, and a general idea of what it means to work.

Exploration – Exploration occurs during the period of a person's life that spans from age 15 to 24. During the exploration period, a person is trying out different paths for themselves. They take a variety of classes at school, try new friends, and switch jobs frequently.

Establishment – The establishment period occurs between the ages of 25 to 44. A person in the establishment period is trying to stabilize their position at work, while trying to develop their entry level skills into something greater.

Maintenance – The maintenance period occurs from the time a person is 45 until they reach the age of 64. During this period, a person is in a process of continual adjustment in an attempt to improve their position in life.

Decline – The decline period begins at age 65 and continues throughout the rest of a person's life. During this stage, a person reduces their output and begins to prepare for their retirement.

¹Careernz. Super's Theory. Available at: <http://www.careers.govt.nz/educators-practitioners/career-practice/career-theory-models/supers-theory/>. Accessed on: 12/10/13.

Life Roles

The life roles are represented in the diagram by the different bands of the rainbow. These 9 roles are what everyone plays at some point throughout their lifetime. Super's nine roles include child, student, leisurite, citizen, spouse, parent, home-maker, worker, and pensioner².

Child – The child role describes the time and energy you expend while relating to your parents. This occurs throughout the course of your life, and ranges from everything from being a newborn to caring for your parents as they age.

Student – A person expends time and energy as a student starting as early as 3 and continuing as late into life as your late twenties (depending on the level of post-secondary education pursued).

Leisurite – This refers to the amount of time a person spends on leisure activities. Typically, people spend more of their time on leisure when they are children and later in life after they retire.

Citizen – This refers to the time a person spends working in their community. This is typically volunteer work and therefore, not paid.

Worker – The worker role refers to the time and energy a person spends while at their paid employment.

Parent – This role refers to the time a person spends taking care of their children. This role tends to diminish over time, as the child grows older.

Spouse – The spouse role refers to the time and energy a person spends in a committed relationship.

Home-maker – This is the time and energy a person spends keeping up their home. This could include everything from home repair to cooking, cleaning, and purchasing household items.

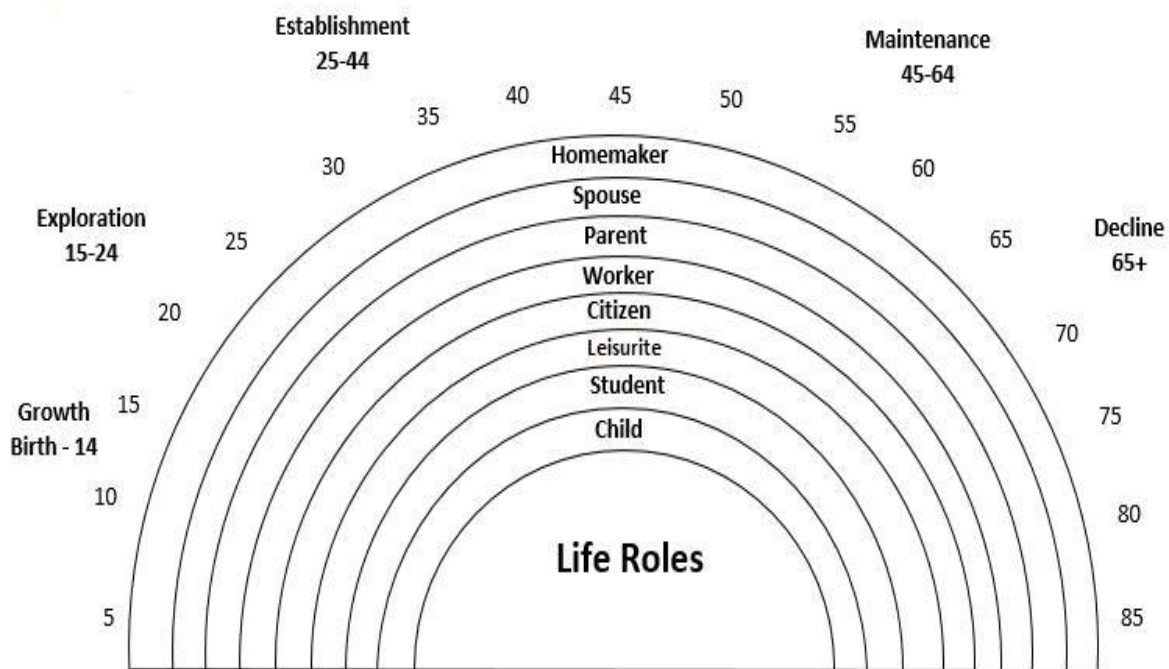
Using the Life Career Rainbow

The Life Career Rainbow can be used to help you find a better balance in your life. It does this by helping you think through the current balance you have between your work and your life. Once you have thought through the balance you currently have in your life, the Life Change Rainbow can help you think through what you want to change in your life to help you achieve this goal.

²Okocha, Aneneosa A. Facilitating Career Development through Super's Life Career Rainbow. 2001. Available at: <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED462641.pdf>

Create Your Own Life Career Rainbow

Now it is time to create your own Life Career Rainbow. Use the diagram below to shade in the different sections of the 8 bands to show the roles you expect to be playing at different points in your life. Keep in mind your goals and life trajectory.



Once you are finished, take a look at the rainbow. Does it have an ideal balance? Is it lopsided in any way? Is there anywhere you think adjustments should be made? Does it appropriately reflect the values you have in your life? If the answer is no to any of these questions, take a look at where adjustments can be made.