

TRUE NORTH

In today's workplace climate, career advisory has gone beyond the simple act of placing clients into job roles. It has become an intricate art of helping clients navigate workplace complexities and interweaving that closely with an individual's beliefs, values and principles. As a career practitioner, you are tasked with the all-important role of helping one find meaning and fulfilment in their career. You are instrumental in their search for a purpose-driven life; for their **TRUE NORTH**.

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LEADING WITH EMPATHY

The Secret to Trust & Retention



75%

OF WOMEN

say employer support & work-life flexibility = key to being respected at work.

WHY EMPATHY AT WORK MATTERS



Enhanced team collaboration



Lower stress levels



Improved individual morale



Stronger community spirit



Greater workplace resilience

Good leaders at the workplace don't just think in terms of productive outputs, but also take employees' wellbeing into consideration.

Five ways Singaporean employers and managers can recognise and boost their leadership with greater empathy



Be Approachable
Show your human side — be there for each other.



Take care of yourself
Feel and create a source of empathy for others.



Practice Active Listening
Understand before reacting.



Empower Your Team
Build motivation in the team to tackle unpredictable situations.



Stay Humble
Empathy grows with consistent practice and humility. Practice makes perfect!

LOVING OUR NEWSLETTER?



You can find all issues of *TRUE NORTH* and other career development resources on our **Online Learning Resource (OLR)** for Career Practitioners.



Scan here or visit
go.gov.sg/olr

TELL US YOUR STORY



If you have cases to share and would like them to be featured on this newsletter, feel free to write to PCD@wsg.gov.sg

This article was first published in *CareersCompass* by *MyCareersFuture*.



FROM THE CASE CHEST

STORIES OF RESILIENCE AND HOPE

As a Senior HR Group Manager and IHRP-SP accredited professional, Nina brings over two decades of experience navigating the dynamic Asia Pacific HR landscape, with focus on the power & energy, infrastructure, and heavy industries. This extensive experience has provided her with a deep understanding of the region's unique challenges and opportunities. As a Volunteer Career Advisor (VCA), Nina leverages her expertise in Human Potential Optimisation, Career & Transition Expertise, and Organisational & People Development to guide individuals in their career journeys.

Stories of Resilience and Hope

One advisee, Mr R, nearing 60, felt the shadow of burnout looming after a long and successful career as a sales leader. He sought guidance not just on transitioning to a more sustainable path, but on rediscovering his passion. He found satisfaction in his work but recognised its long-term limitations due to his age and energy level. Through their sessions, Mr R gained clarity on his Values, Interests, Personality, Skills, and Strengths (VIPS), and they embarked on a journey of exploration, uncovering career options that resonated with his heart such as becoming a part-time adjunct lecturer at tertiary institutions.



Separately, Nina engaged Mr K in his mid-40s, a seasoned business development and sales leader from a global pharmaceutical company. He shared that he has been laid off and this had impacted his confidence. He was anxious about securing new employment, given the challenges in the pharmaceutical industry lately. In these sessions, Nina employed a blend of guidance and support, acknowledging his vulnerability, gathering information about his situation, and listening deeply to his narrative. By posing open-ended questions with empathy and maintaining a non-judgmental, present, and curious stance, Nina facilitated his process of self-discovery.

Together, they explored job search strategies, expanded his networking efforts, and identified opportunities aligned with his strengths, values, and sense of self-worth. Nina also introduced him to valuable resources such as WSG's Career Grit workshops, online career assessment tools, and MyCareersFuture, which became integral tools in his journey. By the end of the session, he had a clearer understanding of the steps he needed to take, and more importantly, a renewed sense of hope. Nina's role as a VCA, acted as a sounding board, a source of encouragement, and a reminder of his inherent capabilities.

Opportunities for Growth: Lessons in Empathy and Empowerment

These experiences have illuminated several key aspects of the VCA role, highlighting opportunities for significant personal and professional growth for both the advisee and advisor as well.

- Each advisee's situation is unique, encompassing not just their practical needs, but also a complex underlying emotions – their fears, their hopes, their vulnerabilities, and their strengths. Taking a holistic and empathetic approach is crucial for effective guidance. By demonstrating genuine empathy, VCAs can encourage advisees to openly share their concerns and collaborate effectively in achieving their goals.
- Providing relevant resources and tools, including WSG's initiatives such as online portals, workshops, and networking opportunities, can significantly empower advisees in their job search. Initiatives like CareerGRIT, with its complimentary workshops and assessment tools (Career Interest, Skills & Values Assessments) can equip them with a compass for their job search journey, and the skills to navigate it successfully.
- Providing advisees with valuable industry experience and insights and peer support as they navigate professional pathways to advance their careers or transit to other jobs.
- Empowering advisees to take ownership of their career journeys and embrace continuous learning is crucial; it's about fostering a lifelong commitment to growth and self-discovery that extends beyond securing immediate employment.

Find out more about the **VCA initiative!**



Scan here or visit
<https://go.gov.sg/vca-truenorth>

Contributed by:
Nina Lim

Senior Regional HR Manager
Volunteer Career Advisor
Workforce Singapore



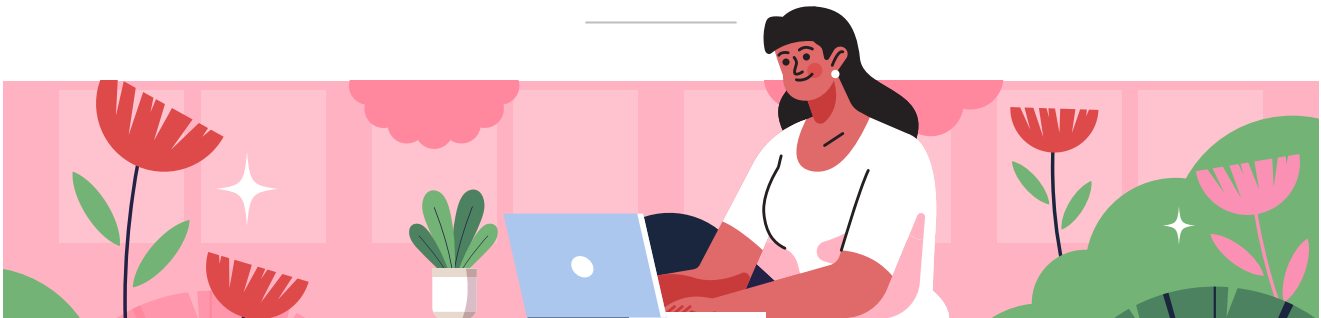


MAIN ARTICLE

This article is the last instalment in the in a four-part series, exploring the topic of career conversations. This series aims to provide guidance on initiating and effectively managing these important conversations.

Issue 23	Issue 24	Issue 25	Issue 26
Creating a safe environment to have career conversations	Fostering a work culture of career conversation and understanding employers' needs	Engaging in quiet quitters and reigniting their motivation	Self Care – Caring for yourself before caring for others

SELF CARE: CARING FOR YOURSELF BEFORE CARING FOR OTHERS



1. Introduction: The Cost of Self-Neglect

The office was quiet as Jane, a seasoned HR manager, stared at her calendar. Five career conversations were scheduled, each demanding focus and empathy. But Jane felt drained even before the first meeting. With a never-ending to-do list and sleepless nights, how could she guide others when she hadn't paused to care for herself?

Though fictional, Jane's story mirrors reality for many HR practitioners. Balancing the dual roles of supporting employees and meeting organisational demands often leaves little room for self-reflection. Career conversations, meant to inspire growth, can feel like just another task.

Here's a tough question: how can we give our best to others when we're running on empty? The answer lies in self-care. Far from being a luxury, self-care is essential—it enables us to lead with empathy, focus, and resilience. For HR practitioners, it is the foundation for transforming career conversations into meaningful, growth-driven exchanges.

This article explores how self-care fuels effective career conversations, offering practical strategies, real-world stories, and resources to support HR practitioners, supervisors and line managers in this journey.

2. Career Conversations: A Pathway to Growth

Career conversations are more than just check-ins or performance reviews. They are opportunities to understand employees' aspirations, align them with organisational goals, and build trust. In Singapore's competitive workforce, such dialogues can be the key to retaining top talent, fostering growth, and creating a motivated team. Yet, for many HR practitioners and managers, they're often reduced to rushed, box-ticking exercises.

At their core, career conversations are about connection. The WSG Career Conversations Guidebook for Employers emphasises that these discussions should be structured yet flexible, allowing employees to voice their ambitions,



identify opportunities, and address challenges. But meaningful conversations require more than surface-level engagement—they demand active listening, preparation, and emotional presence.

One common challenge is navigating these discussions with authenticity. If someone has not taken time to reflect on their own career, how can they guide others meaningfully? Without self-awareness, it's easy for these dialogues to feel transactional rather than transformational.

When done well, career conversations inspire breakthroughs. They help uncover hidden potential, build confidence, and create a sense of purpose for both parties. And in an era where job satisfaction is increasingly tied to personal growth, these conversations are not just a nice-to-have—they are essential for workplace engagement. But to truly unlock their power, HR practitioners and line managers must first take care of themselves. After all, how can you guide others toward career clarity if you are struggling to find your own?



3. Self-Care: The Missing Link in Career Conversations

Self-care is often dismissed as a personal indulgence—something to fit in after meetings, deadlines, and family obligations. But for HR practitioners and managers, self-care is not just a wellness buzzword; it is a professional necessity.

Why Self-Care is Essential for Career Conversations

The WSG Career Conversations Guidebook for Employers highlights that effective career conversations require empathy, active listening, and a growth mindset, as these are key elements in fostering meaningful workplace discussions. But these qualities diminish when HR professionals and managers are struggling with their own well-being. Without intentional self-care, they risk burnout, making it harder to engage meaningfully in these discussions.

The Three Pillars of Self-Care for Professionals

Self-care is not just about taking breaks or getting enough sleep—it is about strategic self-management across different areas:

- **Physical Well-Being:** Maintaining energy levels through rest, nutrition, and movement. Work-life balance is essential for optimising productivity and preventing fatigue. Even small habits—like stepping outside for a short walk—can help reset focus before an important discussion.
- **Emotional Resilience:** Mindfulness, journaling, or peer conversations help clear mental clutter, making space for active listening and empathetic leadership.
- **Professional Growth:** Reflective tools such as the Life Career Rainbow encourage supervisors and managers to visualise how their roles (e.g., “worker,” “mentor,” “spouse”) evolve over time. Recognising imbalances can help practitioners set boundaries and prioritise self-care.

For instance, a HR manager who sees their “worker” role overshadowing their personal roles might reframe their workload, delegate tasks, or implement better boundaries. This self-awareness not only protects their well-being but also enhances their ability to support employees—after all, a burnt-out leader is less effective in guiding others.

Embedding Self-Care in Organisational Culture

Self-care is not just an individual responsibility—organisations must integrate self-care into workplace culture. The guidebook emphasises that employers should encourage flexible work arrangements, wellness programs, and open discussions on mental health.

By embracing self-care as a foundational skill, HR professionals and line managers strengthen their ability to show up for others. It is not selfish—it's necessary. When career conversations are led by someone who is clear-headed, engaged, and emotionally present, they become more than just a routine discussion—they become moments of true impact.

4. Story That Resonates – Alicia's Journey (True North Issue 23)

Alicia, a mid-career professional in the social services sector working as a finance and HR manager, had always been driven by her desire to help others. But somewhere along the way, the very work that once gave her purpose became emotionally exhausting. She found herself juggling workplace expectations, career uncertainty, and the mental fatigue of supporting others while neglecting herself.

Her turning point came when she participated in Polaris by WSG, a structured career guidance programme.

One of the most profound lessons Alicia took away was that self-care isn't about stepping away from responsibilities—it's about managing them in a way that sustains her. She started incorporating small but impactful changes, such as setting boundaries, seeking mentorship, and focusing on leadership development. These steps didn't just improve her own well-being; they helped her increase her visibility at work, became more vocal in management meetings and take proactive steps toward leadership and staff development.

Why This Matters

Alicia's experience mirrors what many HR practitioners and line managers go through. When supporting employees in career conversations, they often pour into others without replenishing themselves. Alicia's story is proof that prioritising self-care does not take away from career conversations—it enhances them.

The best way to care for others is to start by caring for yourself. Only by embracing self-care can professionals guide others with authenticity, clarity, and resilience.

5. Empowerment for Self-Care

For HR practitioners and line managers, self-care is not just a personal responsibility—it is also about having the right support systems in place. While individual self-care strategies are essential, organisations and professional development programmes play a key role in empowering leaders to manage their well-being while guiding others.

One such resource is the WSG Career Conversations Guidebook for Employers. It provides a structured approach for employers to facilitate a meaningful career discussion with their staff. Beyond supporting employees, the guidebook also highlights the importance of self-reflection and well-being for the employers themselves.

Organisational Support: Embedding Self-Care in Work Culture

Employers also play a crucial role in enabling self-care. The WSG Career Conversations Guidebook for Employers emphasises that organisations play a vital role in fostering work-life balance, mental health support, and leadership well-being initiatives, ensuring that staff feels supported in their roles.

- Flexible work arrangements to balance career coaching with personal well-being.
- Mental health initiatives, including peer support networks for HR leaders.
- Regular self-care check-ins as part of professional development.



Self-Care as a Professional Strength

Self-care is not separated from career conversations—it's an integral part of them. Staff who invest in personal well-being are better equipped to:

- Engage meaningfully in career discussions.
- Support employees with empathy and clarity.
- Sustain their own growth while guiding others.

By leveraging local resources, they not only care for themselves but also create a healthier, more resilient workforce.

6. Conclusion – The Ripple Effect of Self-Care

Self-care is often viewed as something secondary to professional responsibilities, but Alicia's story proves otherwise. Caring for yourself is not a distraction from work—it's what makes meaningful work possible.

For HR professionals and line managers, this is not just about personal well-being. It is about ensuring they can engage in career conversations with clarity, empathy, and authenticity. When self-care is prioritised, they do not just show up for employees—they become better leaders, mentors, and decision-makers.

A Call to Action

If you're in a role where guiding others is part of your daily work, ask yourself: Am I giving myself the same support I provide to others? If the answer is no, it's time to start. When HR practitioners and line managers embrace self-care, the impact ripples outward—creating healthier culture, workplaces, deeper career conversations, and a stronger, more engaged workforce.

Contributed by Curriculum Development & Training Team, Career Guidance Division (Workforce Singapore)



BOOK REVIEW

CHAPTERS AND CHOICES: NAVIGATE YOUR NEXT READ



The Long Game: How to Be a Long-Term Thinker in a Short-Term World

Dorie Clark

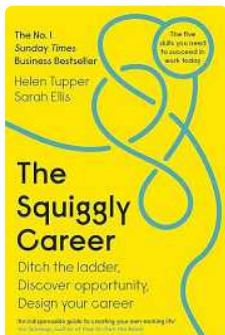
This book challenges the fast-paced, productivity-obsessed mindset of modern work culture and advocates for long-term thinking as the true path to meaningful success, fulfillment, and strategic advantage. Whether you are planning your career, or pursuing personal goals, the book shares how deliberate choices, patience, and persistence can help you create lasting impact.

Sustainable achievement comes from developing three key qualities:

- Personal autonomy in decision-making
- Continuous intellectual curiosity
- Resilience in facing challenges

Practical frameworks in this book provide for:

- Minimising distractions that derail long-term progress
- Making strategic use of your current capabilities and relationships
- Reframing obstacles as valuable learning experiences



The Squiggly Career

Helen Tupper and Sarah Ellis

The traditional concept of linear career progression and lifelong employment with one organisation has become obsolete. Today's career paths are more fluid and unpredictable - or 'squiggly' - with professionals frequently changing roles, sectors, and even entire career direction. While this new reality can feel daunting, it also presents unprecedented opportunities for personal growth, autonomy, and meaningful work.

To thrive in this new landscape, professionals need to develop strong self-awareness by addressing fundamental questions:

- Understanding their core strengths
- Identifying their personal values and recognising their key motivators
- Developing a vision for their future

The book offers practical guidance on several crucial areas:

- Maximising your natural talents and strengths
- Understanding and living by personal values
- Managing self-doubt and building confidence
- Creating and nurturing professional relationships
- Exploring and evaluating career possibilities

Combining theoretical insights about the evolving nature of work with practical exercises for personal development, this book also features learning points from successful individuals who have navigated non-linear career paths.

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