



Declaring a College Major: Indecision Versus Indecisiveness

It's common for high school and college students to question choices and change their minds as they consider and explore college major options. Yet there's a difference between 'indecision' and 'indecisiveness'.

An Anonymous Writer Shares Her Struggles

While cruising the Internet recently, I came upon Google Answers where people write in and post questions that they hope fellow site visitors will answer. Back in July 2005, an anonymous young adult shared the anguish she felt over the choice of a college major...

“Ever since my senior year of high school, I have had problems choosing what I want to major in and I keep changing it, then changing it back, then changing it back again and ultimately no matter what I pick, I always end up regretting it. I don't see anyway for me to learn from it, as I constantly take wayyyyy too long to make decisions, and then usually I make decisions I regret anyway and I wonder what would've happened had I gone with the other decision.”

Unlike students who are experiencing indecision, those experiencing indecisiveness portray an on-going inability to form decisions. This young adult noted that the tendency towards difficulty with decision making was nothing new for her and that it spilled over into other areas of her life. She indicated that this was a long standing problem that was troublesome for her and for others in her life. This is an example of indecisiveness.

Factors that Contribute to Indecisiveness

What are some factors that contribute to college major indecisiveness? Well, there are many and some examples include:

- ▶ lack of motivation
- ▶ lack of self awareness
- ▶ lack of knowledge about the career decision making and exploration process
- ▶ level of maturity/readiness
- ▶ anxiety and/or depression
- ▶ natural personality tendencies
- ▶ belief system including belief in inaccurate college major and career myths
- ▶ feeling powerless to influence career progress or direction
- ▶ low self esteem

Strategies for Dealing with Indecisiveness

It's important to distinguish between indecision and indecisiveness when supporting a student who is trying to decide since intervention strategies are different for each. Career assessment tools (an interest inventory is an example) may be appropriate in either instance, however one on one personal attention is key for those experiencing indecisiveness. Career and/or personal counselors can help students identify the nature and extent of the indecisiveness along with contributing factors. Appropriate strategies for dealing with indecisiveness are based on contributing factors and may include clarification of personal values and priorities, career education, and assertiveness training. In some cases, those experiencing indecisiveness may not be ready for career assessment activities since they may overanalyze available choices and the results could end up mirroring and then heightening their state of confusion.

Plenty of students change their minds about college majors and career choices and many change their minds multiple times. This is **very normal!** A key consideration in differentiating between indecision and indecisiveness is the extent to which decision making tendencies are considered to be troublesome over time...especially for the individual making the decisions.

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About the Author: Susan Posluszny is the author of *In Search of a College Major & Career Direction*, an interactive DVD program designed to support teens and young adults with choosing a college major and career path. As the founder of OPTIONS for Career & Life Planning, Susan specializes in unique programs and services to support students/parents with academic and career planning and adults in career transition. Her career counseling/coaching practice is located in New Boston, NH. You can learn about Susan's DVD program or subscribe to Susan's e-newsletter, Career Options, by going to <http://www.careeroptions4me.com>

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