

SUPPORTING THE WHOLE PERSON

Q&A WITH DTRC CAREER COUNSELLOR SALLY HALLIDAY

What do you find rewarding about working with the DTRC?

First of all, I love to be with creative people — dancers, writers, and artists. I took dance classes throughout my youth, as did my two sisters. One of my sisters had a career in dance, but transition resources like the DTRC did not exist at that time. I have seen how demanding and challenging a career in dance can be. It is an intense career with many years of commitment and can end early in life.

While some dancers have strong support systems, others do not. If they are not in a supportive company or network, dancers can feel alone, isolated and disconnected. The DTRC is the dance community; we are here for dancers, and I am happy to be a part of that support structure.

What can dancers gain from career counselling?

Individuals who are in specialized careers are often challenged in seeing their transferrable skills. Together, we work to pull out details of their experience, identify personal qualities and skills, and then put more formal language around those skills to name them. This is the career exploration stage. We look at it from the perspective of life transition—not just finding a job—and it is important that this exploration work be done creatively with flexibility and openness. People who have been so focused, passionate and hardworking can find this exploration stage paralyzing. Dancers can struggle with a mindset in which they are not allowed to make mistakes. I try

to shift this perspective and encourage them to experiment and loosen up. I tell dancers, “Be curious; pursue informational interviews and job shadowing; be creative in career exploration. It is okay not to know. Try this as a creative process.”

For dancers and non-dancers alike, could you offer a few tips on building professional resilience?

One needs to recognize the resilience skills that one already has. It is often challenging for perfectionists and high achievers to look back at what they’ve done. I ask clients to talk about what they’ve gone through in the past (previous transitions) and to describe what skills they applied at that time. “What helped you then—inner qualities, family support? Identify these things.” Every transition is a different situation in some ways, but we have all been through it before. It’s possible to gain momentum from the backswing.

Some dancers think that life is over if they don’t have their artistic career to define them. During times of transition, some days you wake up excited, and some days you don’t, but these moments in life give opportunity to grow and develop.



Sally Halliday, MA, RCC, CCC, is a Registered Clinical Counsellor who holds an MA in Counselling Psychology and additional training in Career Development, Leadership, Emotional

Intelligence, and Organizational Coaching. She guides individual clients—ranging from transitioning dancers and postdoctoral fellows to mid-career professionals—seeking career and life direction, and facilitates teams through their exploration of interpersonal communication and career development.
