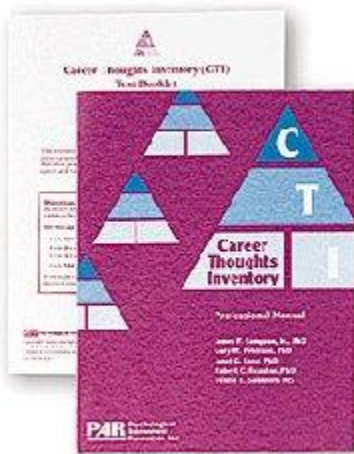


Career Thoughts Inventory (CTI)



The Career Thoughts Inventory (CTI) is a theory-based assessment and intervention resource intended to improve thinking in career problem solving and decision making. The CTI measures dysfunctional career thoughts that may inhibit the ability to effectively engage in the career decision-making process. The 48-item inventory is a self-administered and objectively scored measure that can be completed by most clients within 7 to 15 minutes. The assessment is designed to be used by (a) 11th- and 12th-grade high school students choosing an occupation, choosing a postsecondary field of study, or seeking employment; (b) college students choosing an occupation, choosing a major or field of study, or seeking employment; and (c) adults considering an occupational or employment change or reentering the workforce after a period of unpaid work.

The CTI is based on cognitive information-processing theory, which states that effective career decision making requires effective processing of information in the four processing domains of self-knowledge; occupational knowledge; decision-making skills (comprising the subcomponents of communication, analysis, synthesis, valuing, and execution); and executive processing (self-talk, self-awareness, and monitoring and control). In addition, the CTI draws on concepts from cognitive therapy specifying that dysfunctional cognitions have a negative impact on behavior and emotions. By learning to identify potential negative thoughts, clients can learn to challenge and, ultimately, alter dysfunctional thinking, resulting in positive changes to their behavior and emotions. The CTI can be used to identify negative career thoughts that may affect the ability of individuals to accurately consider information about themselves or options as well as impede engagement in the career decision-making process. Having identified dysfunctional career thoughts, individuals can begin challenging their thinking patterns and work toward altering negative self-talk regarding career decision making. The CTI Workbook, which accompanies the CTI, can be used to further identify, challenge, and alter career thinking that impedes the effective processing of information necessary for career problem solving and decision making.

Instructions for the CTI are to respond to items in terms of the extent of either agreement or disagreement with the statement. Items on the inventory reflect thoughts that people have when considering career choices. Responses range from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The total

CTI score reflects the extent to which individuals engage in thinking that may inhibit effective career problem solving and decision making. Higher scores are indicative of the presence of dysfunctional thoughts that may impede the processing of information necessary to confidently make an informed career choice. Lower scores reflect few dysfunctional career thoughts that negatively influence the career decision-making process and suggest overall readiness to engage in career decision making. Information on the standardization, potential for bias, readability, reliability, and validity of the CTI is presented in the professional manual.

Three construct scales underlie the CTI: Decision-making Confusion, Commitment Anxiety, and External Conflict. Decision-making confusion is the inability to initiate or sustain the decision-making process due to disabling emotion or lack of understanding about the career decision-making process. Commitment Anxiety refers to the inability to commit to a specific career choice, accompanied by anxiety about the outcome of the choice. External Conflict relates to the inability to balance one's self-perceptions with the input from significant others, which may lead to a reluctance to assume responsibility for the decision-making process. Construct scale scores of the CTI enable practitioners to identify specific blocks that impede the processing of information. Individual items on the CTI may also be used to further assist individuals in identifying statements that limit the ability to move forward in the career decision-making process.

The CTI can be used as a screening tool, for needs assessment, and as a learning resource. As a screening tool, the instrument can be used to identify individuals who may have a low readiness for career decision making. Identifying individuals who are less ready to engage in the career decision-making process may inform the decisions of practitioners and individuals regarding the appropriateness of specific career services and programs offered. Individuals reporting more dysfunctional career thoughts would likely require more counselor assistance, whereas those reporting fewer dysfunctional career thoughts may benefit from the use of available resources and materials, with little counselor intervention or engaging in a self-help mode. For needs assessment, the CTI can be used to identify the specific nature of dysfunctional thinking identified during the screening process. The individual's construct scores and individual items on the CTI may be of assistance in further clarifying needs assessment. Considering both the context and the complexity of the career problem identified is important as specific career concerns are explored. As a learning resource, the CTI can be used with the CTI Workbook to assist clients in identifying, challenging, and altering specific dysfunctional career thoughts identified as problematic in the needs assessment process. Homework assignments contained in the CTI Workbook may be used to reframe career thoughts that hinder the career decision-making process and to encourage the use of rehearsal and practice to alter potentially problematic statements so that they become less inhibiting.

The CTI can be quickly administered and scored, easily interpreted, and readily integrated into a variety of counseling modalities. As such, it provides a cost-effective measure for use in career services in a variety of settings. The CTI has multiple uses and can be used during an initial intake procedure or during a counseling session. The use of a limited number of scales on the CTI simplifies interpretation, enhancing its usefulness in practice. When they use it in combination with the CTI Workbook, practitioners have access to interpretive information about the scales and materials for test interpretation. Other components of the workbook provide

opportunities to develop an action plan for using career resources and learning about the career decision-making process. All of these facets contribute to easier integration into existing programs and services.

See also:

- [Career counseling](#)
- [Cognitive differentiation grid](#)
- [Cognitive information processing in career counseling](#)

References:

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2. Sampson, J. P. Jr., Peterson, G. W., Lenz, J. G., Reardon, R. C. and Saunders, D. E. 1996. Career Thoughts Inventory. Odessa, FL: Psychological Assessment Resources.
3. Sampson, J. P. Jr., Peterson, G. W., Lenz, J. G., Reardon, R. C. and Saunders, D. E. 1998. "The Design and Use of a Measure of Dysfunctional Career Thoughts among Adults, College Students, and High School Students: The Career Thoughts Inventory." Journal of Career Assessment 6:115-134.
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